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BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

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LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

VOL. VI.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge.

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LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

TO

HER DAUGHTER,

AND

HER FRIENDS.

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH

AN ENLARGED EDITION,

TRANSLATED FROM THE PARIS EDITION OF 1806.

IN NINE VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.

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1811.

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LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, &c.

[The Letters with an asterisk before the number are new Letters.]

LETTER DCXXV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

Blois, Thursday, May 9, 1690.

I AM determined to write to you every evening, my dear child; I find nothing so agreeable to me as that amusement. I *turn*, I walk, I take up my book; but let me *turn the affair* * as I will, I still want something, and I find that to be, pen, ink, and paper. In short, I must chat with my dear child; and though my letter can go neither to-day nor to-morrow, I will, every evening, give you an account of the day's journey.

My son left Orleans to-day in the stage, which goes off every day at three o'clock in the morning, and gets into Paris the same night. Till I can get news from Denmark for you, I must return to my account of our journey.

We got into the boat at six o'clock, in the finest weather imaginable; I contrived the body of my coach

* An expression which M. de la Garde used on all occasions.

to be placed in such a way, that the sun could not come in; we drew down the glasses, had a charming prospect in front, and the side-windows multiplied our points of view in the most pleasing manner possible. There was nobody but the abbé and myself in this pretty cabinet; we were seated upon soft cushions, quite cool, quite at our ease, and, for every thing else, as snug as a litter of pigs in a farm-yard. We eat warm soups, cooked over a little comfortable fire; in short, we dined in state, like a king and queen. See how the Loire is refined, since the vulgar days, *when the heart was on the left side* *; by the bye, mine, be it on which side it will, is wholly yours.

If you should be curious to know what I do in this triumphal car, where I sail and ride at the same time, without the least fear, I will tell you: I think upon my dear child; I amuse myself with calling to mind the tender affection I have for her, and she has for me; the long tracts of land that separate us; my anxiety for her welfare; and the earnest desire I have to see and embrace her: I think of her affairs, I think of my own, and all this together makes a little of *my daughter's humour*, in spite of *my mother's humour*,† which gives new life to every thing about me. I am full of admiration at the goodness of the abbé, who, at the age of seventy years, ventures on a journey by land and water to serve me: after all this, I take a book that poor M. de la Rochefoucault made us purchase, entitled, *The Recovery of Portugal* (la Reunion du Portugal), which is a translation from the Italian, and admirable, both in point of history and style. It represents Sebastian, king of Portugal, as a young and brave prince, who rushes head-

* See Moliere's *Medecin malgré Lui*.

† Expressions by which the mother and daughter designated particular walks and views at Livri, or at the Rocks.

long upon his fate, and loses his life in Africa, in a war against the son of Abdallah. It is, in short, one of the most amusing pieces of history that can be read. I reflect upon the ways and dispositions of Providence, and on what I have often heard you say, that our wills are the ministers of his eternal decrees: in short, the good abbé and I, who are come from a talkative place, love to chat, but it is in a manner that is both pleasing and improving to us. We have so much pleasure in passing the bridges that lie in our way, that we wish to meet them oftener than we do. I assure you there are few *tablets* of wrecks on the Loire, any more than on the Durance; there would be greater reason to fear the latter, which is sometimes a little more headstrong and impetuous, than the slow and majestic motion of the venerable Loire. In short, we arrived here in very good time; every one is *turning*, every one is busy in shaving and adjusting themselves, except your poor mama, who is seated romantically on the banks of the river, writing to her dear child, in view of our inn; I mean the galley, on board of which you have been. My ears are ravished with the warbling of a thousand nightingales, which puts me in mind of those you hear from your balcony.

I dare not tell you how much gloom the thought of your delicate state of health diffuses in my heart. You will readily conceive what I feel, and how earnestly I wish to hear it is perfectly re-established. Adieu, my dearest, till to-morrow at Tours.

Tours, Friday, May 10.

The same good-fortune still attends us, my dear. I never met with any thing equal to the beauty of our last stage. But can you form an idea in what way our carriage is placed across our boat? We can never be

incommoded with the rays of the sun; for at noon it is over our heads, in the morning at our left hand, and in the evening at our right, and the cabanne * is always our defence. We coast along by these delightful shores, where a thousand different objects are incessantly saluting the eye, like so many new landscapes, which would charm M. de Grignan, and I heartily wish he could witness one that I should have no difficulty in naming.

The day before I set out, the fair Fontanges was expected at court: the chevalier must attend to his duty; I am no longer fit for any thing, and if you did not love me as well as you do, you would certainly burn these miserable letters without breaking the seal.

LETTER DCXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

Saumur, Saturday, May 11, 1680.

We are just arrived, my dear child: we left Tours this morning, where I put a letter into the post for you. Whoever were to deprive me of the faculty of thinking, during my journey, would strangely embarrass me. I am for twelve successive hours in a carriage, placed at my ease; some of which I employ in eating, drinking, and reading, some in looking around me, and admiring the prospects, but a still greater number in musing and thinking of you. I am certain, my dear child, you do not think this flattery, but the plain truth. I run you over in my mind from head to foot; I divide and subdivide you; I recollect a thousand sad events, and others equally delightful: I think on the charms of your youth and your health, and how cruelly they have

* The large boats which carry passengers up and down the river Loire, are so named.

both been treated; how you yourself have abused them: how dreadfully your blood is inflamed; that we were not sufficiently alarmed at the first token we had of it, and which was the beginning of all your disorders; I think, in short, what do we not think, when thinking is the only employment we have? I will not tell you the flight my imagination has taken; the recital would make my letter too long: this, however, let me declare for a truth, that I always find in my heart an equal tenderness towards you. I should be glad to enlarge with you upon certain subjects, but I cannot yet expect that pleasure; in the mean while *I think, therefore I exist*:* I think of you alone in this manner, therefore it is you alone I love.

The good abbé is well, and highly pleased with his journey: no persons certainly ever travelled as we do; it is a pity we have not a little more society; though I assure you, that, for my part, I wish for no one else; and that since I am condemned to be absent from you, there is nothing I like so well as to be alone, and at liberty to give myself wholly up to my own affairs; I shall therefore be content, for four or five months at least, since it must be so.

I wish you would pay a little more attention to mademoiselle de Grignan: as for your own affairs, you know them too well. It is a strange thing to be obliged to retrench for six months together, in order to pay the expenses of a winter passed at Aix: upon my word I think it is rather too much for having barely existed. I live in hopes that Providence will clear up all better than we expect: there are certain hidden circumstances which sometimes come to light suddenly. My dear

* This is the fundamental axiom of Descartes' metaphysics, from which he deduces the reality of our existence, of the soul and its spirituality, of God and his necessity.

child, you well know my thoughts and wishes on this subject, and you easily comprehend what I do not mention.

One thing which makes me more uneasy and impatient than all the rest, is being so long without hearing from you; this grieves me. However, I comfort myself with thinking, that two of your packets will set out from Paris to-day, and be at Nantes on Monday as soon as I shall be there. Thus far I have contrived to settle the conveyance; it would have been madness to think of catching any of your letters, in flying through the country as I do, besides the uncertainty of winds and weather; these have hitherto indeed been very favourable, but who can place dependence on them?

The good abbé sends you a thousand remembrances. I shall read my history of Portugal with great pleasure; but I have read nothing of yours since the twenty-eighth of last month, which is a long time; however, I read over your old letters. Adieu, my child! this is enough for to-day.

LETTER DCXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Ingrande, Sunday evening, May 12, 1650.

The same fine weather, the same delightful prospect, and, I believe, the same melodious nightingales, have attended us hither. I hardly know this country again, it is so beautiful; and I am persuaded it would surprise you as much as if you had never seen it. There are certain periods of life in which we attend to nothing but ourselves. You indeed have never been much occupied in that way; but when we came down this

river together, we were more engaged in disputing about the count des Chapelles, than in admiring the beauties of the rural scenes that surrounded us. Now the case is exactly the reverse: we observe a profound silence, are perfectly at our ease, reading, musing, admiring, out of the way of all sorts of news, and living upon our own reflections. The good abbé is always praying: I listen attentively to his pious ejaculations; but when he is got to his beads, I beg to be excused, finding that I can meditate much better without them*. In short, we manage to pass twelve or fourteen hours, without being very unhappy; such a fine thing is liberty. You know another part of the Loire, for which, though less charming, I have the highest regard, as it has brought, and will bring again, to my arms, that much loved child, who is all the comfort of my life†.

I should have been glad to have seen the bishop of Angers ‡ to-day, and he would have been so too. I had many things to say to him, on the variety of misfortunes with which he is loaded; but he is upon his visitation, and did not receive my letter. To-morrow we shall be in the midst of the great world at Nantes, where I shall receive your letter, and finish this.

Nantes, Monday, May 13.

Indeed this is a curious journal; I impose upon your patience and good-nature, my dear child; and my tedious itinerary may well make you cry out, as you do of those processions which bring you too much rain, *basta la metà de la cortesia* (half this courtesy is suffi-

* Madame de Sévigné used to say, that the chaplet (or beads) was not a devotion, but a distraction.

† Madame de Grignan had often taken water at Roanne, on going from Lyons to Paris.

‡ Henry Arnauld, bishop of Angers.

cient). We are just arrived at this city, so delightfully situated: I can never pass by the foot of a certain tower*, without remembering the poor cardinal and his melancholy end, still more melancholy than you can imagine †: however, I shall pass over this subject altogether, as I have a thousand things to say upon it, which are, perhaps, better unsaid, and it may please Providence to give us an opportunity, some day, of discussing it to the bottom.

Well then, here we are at M. d'Harouis's, welcomed and attended, as if at home. I dread lest M. de Molac, who is here, should come and repeat to me, twenty times over, as he did, you know, once when we were with me, "You should have sent me word of this! you should have sent me word of this!" Do you recollect this folly? In the interim I am employed in reading a packet of yours that I have received; it is the only pleasure I have, though, I assure you, it does not come unattended with emotion: this is a natural consequence of my love for you.

Indeed, indeed, my dear child, you write too much; you destroy your poor constitution; it will never hold out, if you do not manage it a little better, and curb your pen when it is running away with you: so delicate a state of health as yours, requires care and cir-

* The tower of the castle of Nantes, to which cardinal de Retz was sent from St. Vincennes, the 19th August, 1654, and from whence he made his escape the latter end of the same month.

† The *Dictionnaire Historique* says, that *he lived like Catiline, and died like Atticus.* This exaggerated comparison as to his life, seems to be very conjectural with respect to his death. Atticus starved himself to death, to terminate the sufferings of an incurable fistula. Nothing of this kind is known of cardinal de Retz. Madame de Sévigné has said before, that a week's fever terminated his existence. But notwithstanding this, she implies, in this letter, that his death was violent, or rather, perhaps, that it was unchristian.

cumspection. It is true, that the subjects you treat would suffer under any hand but yours: nevertheless, you must be careful of yourself; I hope you will amend in this particular; and now I answer your letter.

In the first place, then, I hope you did not rank me in the number of those who wished for your departure, since nothing can be more grievous to me, than to be separated from you; but speak the truth, and take to yourself all the honour which is justly your due; say that you love M. de Grignan, who, indeed, is deserving of it, and that you were charmed with an opportunity of obliging him. I have more than once remarked, that you could not be completely happy, when he was far from you. He has a politeness and complaisance that are more capable of influencing you, and of drawing you to the further end of the world, than the conduct of any other person: by always making you the mistress of your own actions, he makes himself the master of them: this is natural to him; but if such a heart as yours required any skill to manage it, he has found the true method. Through all his complaisant yieldings, you saw what was his wish, and you determined to indulge that wish. He should, therefore, be a little more explicit in regard to such very expensive excursions, or you should give your reasons a little more peremptorily, since it is surely for the common interest of both, to lay aside the part of governors, which you play but too well for your own interest. You will say this is idle talk, as the thing is done; and that nothing therefore remains, but to repair the disorder as well as possible. I have received M. de Grignan's letter, which is a very polite one; he wishes to convince me, that I ought not to entertain an ill opinion

of him, and gives his reasons so well, that I have not a word to say.

Your little apartment shall be fitted up according to your own directions; I fancy the workmen are to set about it to-day: honest du But is to be superintendant. Surely, my dear child, we may hope for some better destiny, than to be separated at such a distance from each other, as we are at present: you are very fortunate to have given such orders as to your estate of Entrecasteaux, and to find it thrive so well. I very much fear I shall meet with the contrary in this neighbourhood: I shall, however, inform you of every thing.

I have read your letter over again this morning, and I cannot comprehend why you would include me in the *every one*, who you say *wished you gone*; this is a reflection I am not acquainted with. I shall find time to think of it, though I am no longer in a boat: I fancy I have judged better of the true reason of your departure. You may comfort yourself, for the expense of the Aix journey, by reflecting, that M. de Grignan would not have spent less had you not been with him, that his return would also have been attended with expense: think too of the necessity there would have been for fine clothes for the dauphiness's wedding; and lastly, that this journey may, perhaps, have determined the fate of mademoiselle de Grignan. Thus Providence has ordered every thing for the best. All this has offered itself to my imagination, by way of consolation for a thing that is past, and consequently no longer in our power, and of which we talk only for talking's sake; but at the same time I must ask you very seriously, if it is really possible that you could have entertained a thought, that I was pleased to see you go, and in such a situation? By your answer, I shall judge what you think

of my affection for you, and in what manner you can reconcile two such contraries.

Adieu, my dearest child! I cannot reproach myself with a thought relative to you, that is not perfectly conformable to that inviolable love I have always expressed for you.

Nantes, Tuesday night, May 14.

I have this moment received your packet; and though the post is ready to set out, I cannot forbear writing a line or two, to thank you and my pretty Paulina for your kindness. You have fatigued yourself terribly, my child; pray take some rest, and be careful how you throw yourself into such a state again. Follow the advice of La Rouviere; I shall make it a matter of no small merit on his side with madame de Thianges, that he has cured her brother *; I wish he had cured you also.

We have formed a very just opinion of the prior of Cabrieres, he is a true *Mock Doctor*: nevertheless, madame Coulanges writes word, that, in *making his faggots*, he has made a cure of madame de Fontanges, who is returned to court, and who, on the very day of her arrival, received a most flattering visit. It seems the king will have the prior settled at Paris, and he goes back only to come again.

The comparison of Carthage and your apartment is equally just and beautiful, it speaks for itself; I love these sprightly sallies. Would you think it? I have shut myself up to-day, purposely to be at leisure to write to you; and have, with unparalleled rudeness, shut my doors against all the ladies: I had to answer M. de Grignan, and to finish this letter, without reckoning a

* Marshal de Vivonne.

thousand notes that I have received from my other friends. Adieu; on Saturday you shall hear from me again. Let me know if your journey has not injured you: ours has not been attended with a single inconvenience.

LETTER DCXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Nantes, Friday, May 17, 1680.

I ASSURE you, my child, I am heartily tired of this place; neither M. de Molac, nor the ladies, with all their civilities, can comfort me for the want of my woods; for I no longer think of Paris. The Rocks! the Rocks! I sigh for the Rocks! I long for my *Rochecourbière* *; I long to rove through those delightful alleys, instead of being confined to a society that affords me no pleasure. My greatest satisfaction is in visiting the nuns of Saint-Marie; they are truly amiable women; they still retain the remembrance of you, of which they do not fail to make a merit with me: they are neither silly nor conceited, like some you know; they do not believe the present pope † to be a heretic; they understand the religion they profess, and will never reject the Holy Scriptures because they have been translated by worthy men; they pay all due honour to the saving grace of Christ; they acknowledge the power of Providence; they educate the young girls committed to their care very properly, and neither teach them to lie nor to dissemble; no chimeras, no idolatry, is to be

* A very pleasant grotto in the gardens at Grignan, in which to rest when tired with walking.

† Innocent XI., who passed for favouring the Jansenists, merely because he took no steps against them.

found amongst them. In short, I have a great regard for them. M. de Grignan would think them Jansenists; for my part, I think them Christians: there are two of them who have an infinite deal of wit. I shall go to their house to-morrow to write, and I shall dine with them on Saturday: they are all the comfort I have here.

I begin this letter to-day, because the letters are brought at ten in the morning, and the post does not set out till six in the evening, which is a good plan; and, in the next place, I want to tell you an odd thing, that, when I first open any of your letters, I am in such agitation, that I do not observe half the contents; but, in reading them over a second time, I discover a thousand things upon which I have something to say. The first that occurs to me at present is *your Carthage* *; make yourself easy about it, I beseech you, and take my word that it shall be finished sooner than poor Dido finished hers; however, I am charmed with the simile.

I am surrounded here with the plague of nine years' accounts, that remain to be settled, and which my son had in a manner only glanced over. I have receipts out of number to collect and examine. What immense trouble does ten thousand francs beforehand give a bad paymaster, and those who are concerned with him! We have seized upon every thing; we hope to recover certain fines from some lands belonging to us, but want two thousand francs immediately: we have a number of advisers; all I am grieved at, is the being obliged to distress any one; but I am playing a desperate game, and when I ask myself who shall be ruined, M. de la

* She refers to the apartment preparing for madame de Grignan, in the hotel de Carnavalet.

Jarie or myself, I make no scruple to say, M. de la Jarie, and that gives me courage.

Such, my dear child, is the intelligence with which I shall fill my letters: when I reflect how much I interest myself in little circumstances of this kind, which I find in yours, I imagine you must feel the same towards me, and that you would not wish me to think higher of your regard and affection.

Living is very cheap in this place; had it been the same at Aix, you would not have spent so much last winter; it is a charming circumstance too that every thing there is the same as at Paris: what a precious resemblance! You have certainly reason to admire the caprice of those who, while they blame your extravagance, condemn the frugality of your housekeeping; you were very much in the right to make no addition to it; you have a way of doing things, that dazzles people; for your steward swears no one could keep a better house, or entertain with greater elegance and politeness. Fifty servants! Heavens! I was puzzled to reckon them up. As to Grignan, I cannot conceive how you can wish for more company there than you have already in your own family; you know, that when we were alone, there were a hundred of us; and I thought that a very sufficient number for one house. You should consider, that so many mouths to feed will make provisions as dear to you, as if you lived with a less retinue at Paris. Reflect on these matters while musing so unprofitably in your closet: in these times of retirement let me recommend to you the care of yourself. Your reveries are never agreeable; they impress you too deeply; you have felt the ill effects of them, and know how necessary it is for you to be sometimes *spensierata* (unoccupied) which is the best thing for delicate constitutions. What you read is also, in my opinion, too

heavy; you fatigue yourself with history and abstruse subjects. It is really a misfortune to have so good an understanding and so fine a wit; it destroys the health of the possessor. For my part I am almost ready to blush at the good health I enjoy. It seems to partake of folly, to be so well as I am; it is much superior to the mediocrity of my understanding, and sometimes I think that I deserve a slight illness: I wish, for my honour and your relief, that I could bear one of your disorders for you; the more I think of this, the more I am surprised that my constitution should be so good, as to hold out against the many pangs I endure.

I have not sufficiently told you how much I love Paulina, and how handsome, aimable, sprightly, and easy, I think her; it would be a great pity she should be spoiled; let me therefore advise you not to part with her. I am afraid the little marquis has forgotten me.

Saturday, May 18.

You desire me to be no longer uneasy about your health; is it possible your disorders are at an end? Ah! my dear child! I dare not flatter myself with the thought, which would soften all the cares of life. I believe, as you do, that you lose something by my not being at Paris; my correspondence is authentic, for I never trust to common report: it cannot be expected that the Grignans should take so much pains as I do. I am perfectly convinced of the necessity of your expenses at Aix. I said every thing to myself that you have said to me, and I mention it to you only to have the pleasure of confirming your arguments.

I was afraid the story of madame de Dreux and her mother would have a strong effect on your imagination;

and I repented having mentioned it to you; but I was so much occupied with it myself, that it was impossible for me to refrain from communicating it.

You may think, perhaps, from what I have said about your understanding, that I am silly enough to run about exclaiming that my daughter is ill, because she has so much mind: indeed, indeed, my dear! I am not one to think or talk thus; I have written you my real sentiments on the subject, and they remain between us; we do not mention it as madame de la Fayette does; she declares openly, that she strives to make herself as foolish as possible, by divesting her mind of as many ideas, as persons in general endeavour to furnish theirs with; she has no doubt that her understanding does her harm, as well as all kinds of application; and she is resolved to rid herself of such inconveniences. I could wish you, in that respect, to resemble her.

M. de Luxembourg's affair has, you see, turned out tolerably well. His intendant is sent on a trip to Marseilles *; the dirty jacket of an inhabitant of the galleys will sit but uncouthly upon him, who has been all his life used to dress in print; in short, he is condemned; he has made *amende honorable*, but he has cleared his master, and all that can be said of the matter is, that he is undoubtedly the very best, or very worst of servants; no one can dispute this with me. There is infinite subject for talking, reasoning, and admiring, in this affair.

I still read my little book, *the Recovery of Portugal*; I would send it to you if I were on your continent; but at present I seem to be out of the reach of every body and every thing. It is written in Italian, by a gentle-

* Bonard, who, in conjunction with Le Sage, or deceived by this wicked priest, had implicated his master in certain diabolical machinations against a girl of the name of Dupin.

man of Genoa, whose name is Contestago; he is a writer of repute: a friend of cardinal d'Estrées and madame de la Fayette, has translated it into French, in which language it reads remarkably well*.

Adieu, my ever lovely and beloved! I have now done with my Provence letter, which always claims the privilege to be first dispatched; I shall now go to the good sisters, and write some short notes to my acquaintances. Your letters constitute all my amusement, as usual; you speak to me in them, and I embrace you in mine with a tenderness that no words can express.

LETTER DCXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

Nantes, Monday, May 20, 1680.

I HAVE been here just a week, and I assure you I have had very little amusement during my stay. To-morrow we go to Seilleraie; which is very much improved since you were there. I shall not sleep there: I take a young girl with me, who pleases me; I thought her a perfect Agnes; but I have discovered unexpectedly, that she has a great share of good sense, and an immoderate desire to learn every thing fit for a person in a middling station—in short, she has won my heart; her mother is a ridiculous devotee. This girl has made the best use possible of her confessor; he is a Jesuit, and a man of learning; she entreated him to take pity on her; he

* This work appeared in Italian under the name of Conestagio, in the year 1585. But we are told that the real author is D. Jean de Sylva, count de Portalegro, who had followed king Emanuel of Portugal into Africa as Spanish ambassador. This is a curious work. Langlet does not give the name of the French translator.

has done so, and she has received such profits from his instructions, that she cannot be said to be ignorant of any thing: all this is concealed beneath a pretty face, extreme modesty, natural timidity, and the age of seventeen years. She understands and sings the opera airs better than most I have met with. She is a relation of the first president, and of M. d'Harouis. I wish she could take the place of mademoiselle de Plessis till All-Saints only; and she wishes as heartily that her mother was like me.

LETTER DCXXX.

TO THE SAME.

Nantes, Saturday, May 25, 1680.

While I am waiting for the arrival of your letter, I must converse with you a little. I hope you have received so many of mine, that you will be for ever cured of any uneasiness on account of the delay of the post. For my part, my child, I feel as if I had been six months in this place, and the month of May would last for ever. Do you remember the fancy that once entered your head, that there were some months that never had an end? I was of a different opinion when I was with you; all my concern was, to find them fly away so rapidly. But how I admire this month of May! what have I not done? what have I not seen? what have I not thought, in this charming month? and, after all, I shall get to the Rocks before it is ended. My son was desirous we should go to Bodegat, where indeed we have many affairs to settle: and pressed me particularly, above all things, to go to Tonquedec's; but as I am not very fond of this visit, I shall defer it till I am obliged to go to Rennes to pay a visit to M. and madame de Chaulnes.

I am at present going to see the Rocks, where I shall send for all my people from Bodegat. You will ask me, perhaps, if no one could have transacted the business for me here? No, my dear, no; my presence was absolutely necessary, and the interest of my friends on the spot: this has been a sort of comfort to me, besides the pleasure of passing a part of my afternoons with the poor girls of Saint-Marie. I have made them a present of a little book, entitled *La Frequente Communion**, with which they are charmed; but this is the greatest secret in the world. I beg you will read the second part of the second treatise in the first volume of *Moral Essays*; I am sure you know it, but you may not perhaps have observed it particularly; it is on the subject of *submission to the will of God*. You will there see how clearly it is demonstrated that Providence governs all things; that is my creed, by that I abide: and though a contrary doctrine may be advanced elsewhere, to keep fair with all sides, I shall consider such conduct only in the light of a political stratagem†, and follow the example of those who believe as I do, though they may change their note.

We dined yesterday at Seilleraie, as I told you we should do: my little Agnes was delighted with this party, though there was nobody but the good abbé and the abbé de Bruc; she is nineteen years of age, and not so simple as I thought; she has an infinite desire to learn; she is already acquainted with many things; and, as you said of Marie at Grignan, she guesses what you are going to say to her; she is a charming girl.

* Written by M. Arnaud. It was he who began the war he sustained throughout his life against the opinions of the Jesuits. Such a book, particularly at such an epocha, was truly contraband goods to the nuns.

† We cannot help smiling to see madame de Sévigné accusing the Jansenists of Jesuitism.

Her confessor makes her communicate twice a week; what a profanation! she makes one in every party of pleasure that she can, at least she wishes it, which is alone sufficient to prohibit so frequent an appearance at the holy table. She has read all the romances she could find, and with all the eagerness that curiosity, and the pleasure of deceiving, can inspire. Between you and me, if I wished a girl to be wanton, I need only give her a confessor, and a mother, such as she has.

No letters from Paris yet, my dear; let me, therefore, say a word to you about Nantes: there is the lady here, a kind of intendant, and no intendant; a madame de No***, daughter of madame de Br***, about seventeen years of age, very silly, and very conceited. Her husband is of the family of Be***, but is absent; his wife gives herself airs, and thinks it is my place to pay her the first visit, for what reason I cannot comprehend; and therefore, without waiting till she has cleared the point, I shall set out for the Rocks: this will be a good thing for madame de Molac; it will save trouble: she is at Paris, and her husband † is gone to fetch her.

I have just received your letter of the 15th of this everlasting month: I declare I never found one like it for length. I see you have received all mine: I entreat you not to be uneasy, if, at any time, you should be disappointed; as you must be sensible this depends on the motions of the post, which are not always certain. Till now I have had no reason to complain, for I receive your letters only two days later than at Paris; this is all that can be expected at so immense a distance: but you say I am not struck with this distance: this is said by a person more truly separated from me than I

† M. de Molac was governor of the city and castle of Nantes.

thought; who has altogether forgotten me, and the fondness of my heart for her; who has lost the remembrance of that weakness of nature, that propensity to tears, of which her firmness and philosophy have so often made a jest. It is for me to complain; my feelings, on this score, are more poignant than I can express; with all my admirable notions of Providence, I can scarcely keep myself from sinking under such strokes: an undisturbed peace, and an implicit submission, is the lot of the perfect; while the knowledge of a Providence, of which I have made so bad a use, is given me only for my punishment. You say that I make God the author of every thing that happens; read, read, I say, that part of the treatise I have pointed out to you, and you will find that we are to look to Him for every thing, but with reverence and humility, and consider man only as the executor of his orders, from whose agency he can draw what effects he thinks proper. It is thus we reason, when our eyes are lifted up to heaven; but, in general, we are apt to confine our views to the poor contemptible second causes that strike our bodily senses, and bear with impatience what we ought to receive with submission; and such, alas! is my present wretched situation. I join with you in believing, that philosophy is good for little, except to those who do not stand in need of it. You desire me to love you more and more: indeed you embarrass me; I know not where to find that degree of comparison; it is beyond my conception: but this I am certain of, that I never can, in thought, word, or deed, evince the thousandth part of the affection I bear you; and this it is that sometimes distracts me.

Madame de la Fayette is still inconsolable, notwithstanding the favours her son has received *; her heart

* He had obtained a regiment.

is even more affected than I imagined. She has been to return thanks to his majesty, who gave her a most gracious reception; and yet she cannot bear the court, but is returned back to Paris. Madame de Vins has come into my mind, as well as into yours, in regard to her pleasant situation at Fontainbleau last year. She pays me a thousand attentions; and I am affected with her merit and her misfortunes: the higher she was raised, the greater is her fall; she cannot now endure a place which is no longer her home; she confines herself wholly to her family, and the law-suits which press more heavily upon her than ever. I believe I was a comfort to her at Paris, for I always made her my first and chief concern. We correspond about you; she writes me word, that she is our emporium: I think myself greatly honoured by her friendship and notice.

You have greatly delighted me with your account of the Carmelites, whose three vows are changed to three things perfectly suitable to the sisters of Saint Theresa, interest, pride, and hatred.

The dauphiness says she has seen nothing at Paris but heads, and the tops of the trees in the Thuilleries; this speech will do her no disservice at court. There was a terrible quarrel the other day, between the king and madame de Montespan: M. Colbert endeavoured to bring about an interview, but could, with great difficulty, obtain of his majesty to consent to a *medianoche* with her as usual; it was only on condition that it should be general, and every body admitted.

The lovely Fontanges has relapsed into her old disorder, and the prior * has had recourse to his old medicines: if they fail, he must return to his *faggots*. I have some excellent letters from La Troche; her son is witness to

* The prior de Cabrières, whom she compared to the Medecin malgré Lui.

a number of transactions; but it would be ridiculous in me to send you an account of the whole; you have a brother, and brother-in-law, at court.

You certainly jest, when you say that your brother ought to give me the preference; I should be very sorry if he did, though it is proper he should preserve some appearance of duty: he is to come to me when the king sets out on his tour.

Adieu, my beloved child; it is very good of you to prefer the nothings and idle chat of Pilois*, that I communicate to you, to the news of the gay world; however, I am not your debtor in that; for the little details from Grignan are infinitely more acceptable to me, than all the accounts from Fontainbleau.

Do not hurry yourself about the letter to the princess de Tarente; perhaps she is not yet at Vitré. The visionary nuptials with the prince of Denmark did not last long; and several other matches have since fallen to the ground in the same way.

LETTER DCXXXI.

TO THE SAME.

Nantes, Monday evening, May 27, 1680.

I WRITE to you to-night, my dear, because, Heaven be praised, I shall set out from hence to-morrow morning by day-break, and shall not even wait the arrival of your letters, to answer them. I have a man and horse to bring them to me where I dine, and I shall have this letter, which will go to-night; so that I have taken every precaution to make our correspondence as uninterrupted as the nature of things would admit. I am

* Madame de Sévigné's gardener at the Rocks.

like Harlequin in the play, who wrote an answer before he received the letter.

I was yesterday at Buron, and returned from thence this evening. I have been ready to weep to see the desolation of this estate; there were the finest trees in the world upon it, and my son, in his last journey, gave the finishing stroke to the last. He would even have sold a little copse, which was the greatest ornament of the place. Is not this lamentable? He scraped together four hundred pistoles by this plunder, of which he had not a single penny left in a month. It is impossible to think with patience how he acts, and what his Britany journey cost him, notwithstanding he discharged his coachman and footman at Paris, and took nobody but Larmechin with him. He has found out the art of spending an immense deal of money, without making any show for it, of losing, without playing, and of paying, without discharging his debts. War or peace, he is for ever crying out for money; in short, he is a perpetual drain, and what he does with his money I cannot conceive, for he appears to have no particular passion; I really think his hand is a crucible, which melts money the instant it is put into it. You must bear with me a little, my dear child, while I give a vent to my vexation. The afflicted dryads, the venerable sylvan deities, driven from their ancient abodes, and not knowing where to hide their heads; the old crows, who had inhabited the summits of our lofty oaks for upwards of two centuries; and the melancholy owls, who dwelt beneath the impenetrable shades of their branches, from whence, with their shrill cries, they denounced approaching misfortunes to man, all, methought, crowded around me with their complaints; and who knows but several of our old oaks might have spoken, like that in

which Clorinda † was enclosed? This place was once *un luogo d' incanto* (a place of enchantment), if ever there was one. In short, my imagination was so forcibly struck with the scene of desolation that presented itself, that I returned home in sorrow; nor was the supper which the first president gave me able to rouse my spirits.

I must now tell what sort of a personage this first president is. You imagine that he is a disagreeable snuffy old fellow, like your R***. By no means: he is a young man of seven and twenty; his name is Brunelaie; he is very handsome, a nephew of M. d'Harouis, and was educated with young de la Seilleraie‡. I have seen him a thousand times, without imagining him to be a magistrate; however, such he certainly is, and he attained to this dignity by his great interest; and, by the help of forty thousand francs, has purchased all the necessary experience for being the head of a superior body, the chamber of accounts at Nantes: besides all this, he has married a young girl whom I know very well, and whom I saw every day, for five weeks, at the assembly of the states at Vitré; so that I look upon husband and wife, the one as a pretty little boy, for whom I cannot possibly have the least reverence, and the other a pretty little girl, whom I am unable to honour. They came from the country on purpose to pay their respects to me.

On the other hand, M. de No*** came to pay me a visit on Saturday, having just returned from Brest: this civility obliged me to go the next morning to see his wife§, who returned my visit the same evening, and to-day they have given such a magnificent entertainment

† See the 18th canto of Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered.

‡ Son of M. d'Harouis.

§ See Letter 25th May.

en maigre, on account of its being Rogation week, that the least fish at table seemed *la signora balena**.

I have been to take my leave of my poor sister of Saint-Marie, with whom I have left a very good book. I have also taken leave of the beautiful meadow. My Agnes is ready to weep at my departure; and I, my dear, am rejoiced at it; I am delighted with the thoughts of visiting my woods; I hope I shall find some trees at the Rocks that have escaped the fury of the axe. This is all that I have to say to you to-day.

LETTER DCXXXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Friday, May 31, 1680.

NOTWITHSTANDING this letter will not go till Sunday, I am resolved to begin it to-day, that I may date once more in the month of May. I fear that of June will appear still longer to me. I am certain, however, of not seeing so fine a country as the one I have left. There is a month in the year in which it rains every day; this is owing to your prayers; why will you not leave Providence a little to itself? sometimes too much rain, sometimes too great drought: you are never contented. God forgive me! but this puts me in mind of the story of Jupiter in Lucian, who is so wearied with the incessant importunities of mortals, that he sends Mercury to inquire into the matter, and, at the same time, orders ten thousand bushels of hail to fall upon Egypt, to stop their mouths.

I will no longer oblige you to answer me on the subject of the Divine Providence, which I so greatly re-

* A whale.

vere; and which, in my opinion, commands and orders every thing in the world. I am persuaded you will not dare to treat this opinion as an inconceivable mystery, with the disciples of your father Descartes: it would be indeed inconceivable, that God should have made the world, and not direct all that passes in it. Those who make such fine restrictions and contradistinctions in their writings, speak much more freely, and with greater truth on the subject, when they have no crooked policy to govern them. These *cutpurses* are very agreeable in their conversation. I shall not mention their names, because I fancy you guess the principal one; the others are the abbé du Pile, and M. Dubois*, whom you are acquainted with, and who has an infinite share of wit. Poor Nicole is still in the Ardennes†, and M. Arnaud buried under-ground, like a mole ‡. But whither is my pen running? This is not what I meant to say to you. I intended to tell you, that I received your letters at the place where we dined the day I left Nantes, and that, having no other means of conversing with you at so great a distance, the reading of them forms an occupation preferable to every other.

We found the roads greatly improved between Nantes and Rennes, thanks to the care of M. de Chaulnes; but the incessant rains we have had of late have made them as if two winters had followed close upon each

* Dubois, of the French academy, who has translated several works of Cicero and Saint Augustin.

† The forest of Ardennes, in the Low Countries.

‡ After the death of madame de Longueville, these able writers, fearing persecution, left France. Arnauld retired into the Low Countries, where he lived long unknown and in poverty. He remained there till his death. Nicole, more conciliating and less dreaded, returned to France. He figured in the quarrel of Bossuet and Fenelon. He supported the former, but with prudence and moderation.

other. We were continually in sloughs, or rivers of water; we did not dare to cross over by Chateaubriant, for fear of being unable to get further. We arrived at Rennes on Ascension-eve, and dear good Marbeuf was ready to devour me; nothing would satisfy her, but my taking up my abode for a time at her house, but I refused; I would neither sup nor sleep there: the next day she gave me a very elegant public breakfast, when the governor, and every person of note in the town, came to visit me. We set out again at ten o'clock, though every body assured me, that I had time enough before me, and that the roads were *like this room;* for that, you know, is the usual comparison: however, we found them so much *like this room*, that we did not get there till after midnight, and were all the way up to the axle-trees in water, and from Vitré to this place, a road I have passed a thousand and a thousand times, it was impossible to know it again; the causeys are become impassable; the ruts are sunk to a frightful depth; the little inequalities are perfect mountains and caverns; in a word, *finding* that we could no longer *find* our way, we sent to Pilois for help: he came accordingly, bringing with him about a dozen stout country-fellows, some of whom held up the carriage, while others went before with wisps of lighted straw; and all spoke such jargon, that we were ready to die with laughing: at length, thus attended, we arrived here, our horses jaded, our people dripping, our carriage almost broken down, and ourselves tolerably fatigued: we made a very light supper, went to bed, slept heartily, and this morning, when we awoke, we found ourselves safe and sound at the Rocks, though very much out of sorts. I had taken the precaution to send a servant before us, that we might not come into the midst of a dust of four years standing; and we are tolerably decent at least. We

have been entertained with a great number of visitors from Vitré, such as the Recollets, mademoiselle du Plessis, still in tears for her mother, &c. &c. but I had not a moment's comfort, till I had got rid of them all, which was about six o'clock in the evening, and had spent a little time in my woods, with honest Pilois. The walks and alleys are really enchanting; there are half a dozen new ones you have never seen. By the bye, be under no apprehension about my exposing myself to the damps; I know it would make you angry if I did, and that is sufficient to deter me.

You always tell me that you are in good health, and so does Montgobert; and yet I cannot help thinking, that the plan of plunging twice a day into the Rhone, can only suit a person whose blood is violently heated. I entreat you, my child, to consult a very grave and learned author, in regard to the effects bathing may have on your lungs: you know I was witness to the evident injury you sustained from your half-baths, though they were advised by Fagon*.

You must certainly have stood in need of all your strength to support the numerous visitors you have had; twenty persons extraordinary at table, makes me start a little. These are whole retinues, as Corbinelli used to call them, when he found himself so crowded in your drawing-room, and neither saluted nor took notice of any one: it must be owned that your house is the most frequented of any in the country: this is living at rack and manger. Do you remember, when we had all the Fouesnels here, with what impatience we waited for the happy minute when they were to take their leave; how cheerfully we bid them adieu in our hearts, and how terrified we were, lest they should yield to the

* First physician to Lewis XIV.

false entreaties we made them to stay; how our hearts bounded, when we saw them fairly gone; and our reflections, how much bad company was preferable to good, the latter occasioning pain when they leave us, whereas the departure of the other takes a weight from the mind, and restores it to freedom? do you remember all this, and how perfectly we enjoyed ourselves upon the occasion?

I should chide you for writing me so long a letter, if I did not believe that this employment is less injurious to you, than the being obliged to keep up a long conversation. Talking of conversation, that between M. de Louvois * and M. de Vardes has made some noise, as they write me from Paris; and that he quitted the Grignans and the Montanegres for this exile. It is feared that there is some embassy on the carpet, which terrifies his family on account of the expenses. Upon the whole, I think M. de Grignan has not been badly used by the ministers; there was no avoiding this journey; it has cost Montanegre † still more. I think it was behaving with great prudence and dignity, not to appear chagrined at the disappointment of the dinner; but, after all, I cannot conceive how people can subject those who lavish their money upon them, and ruin themselves to do them honour, to such mortifications.

Madame de Coulanges writes me word, that madame de Maintenon has lost a cane to the dauphin; madame de Coulanges has ordered it to be made. The head is a pomegranate of gold, studded with rubies; it opens

* M. de Louvois went into Provence, to negotiate and sign the treaty by which the duke of Mantua yielded Casal to France. The marquis de Boufflers took possession the 30th September, 1681.

† M. de Montanegre had the same command in Languedoc, as M. de Grignan had in Provence.

and discovers the miniature picture of the dauphiness, with these words underneath, *Il piu grato nasconde**. Clement formerly made this device for you; but that which seemed an exaggeration when applied to you, is perfectly true with regard to this princess. The beautiful Fontanges still continues very ill. My son tells me, they pass their time very pleasantly at Fontainbleau. Corneille's comedies are the delight of the whole court; I have written to my son, that it must be a great pleasure to be obliged to be there, to have a master, a place, and the favour of the great; that had it been my case, I should have been extremely fond of that part of the world; that the contrary was the sole reason of my removing to such a distance from it; that this kind of contempt was, in fact, the result of disappointment and vexation, and that *I abused it out of pure revenge*, as Montaigne says of youth; in short, that I wondered how he could prefer passing his time as I do, with mademoiselle du Plessis and mademoiselle de Launay, to spending it in the midst of all that is gay and great.

What I say for myself, my child, I say in reality for you; for do not imagine, if M. de Grignan and you were situated agreeably to your merit, that you would have any dislike to such a life; but it does not please Providence, that you should arrive at more greatness than you at present possess. As to myself, I have seen the day when little, very little, was wanting for fortune to have placed me in the most agreeable situation in the world; when, all of a sudden, the scene changed to imprisonment and exile†! Do you think my fortune has

* The greatest charms are concealed.

† Madame de Sévigné alludes to the banishment of M. de Bussy, the chief of her house, and the confinement of M. de Fouquet, her intimate friend. To which may be added, the exile of the Arnaulds, and,

been the happiest in the world? yet I am content; or, if I have my moments of murmuring, it is not on my own account.

You give me a very pleasing description of the manner in which madame D**** bestows her favours on her suitors; it is a sort of economy in love, worthy of Armida. You seem to believe, that M. de Rouillé will not return: I am sorry for it, and I should be still more so, were it not that I believe your stay in Provence almost at an end, and consequently that you can have little occasion for him. If any thing is to be done in the assembly, the coadjutor will give a good account of it, in the absence of M. de Grignan.

Sunday, June 2.

This house is very different from yours; under the pretence of writing, I have only seen my woods. I have read the Recovery of Portugal, which has pleased me much. I have not yet fixed upon what I shall read next. It rains incessantly: when the princess comes to Vitré, I shall not go there, I am so angry. The true name of her son-in-law is Oldembourg; I took pleasure in writing it ridiculously †, from its being a German name: it was a sorry jest. There is subject enough for a year's conversation in the inconceivable and surprising state of the hearts of M. de la Trousse and madame de Coulanges. I hope we shall one day discuss together this subject, and several others, if you have no objection. My lovely child, adieu, I embrace you with all the affection of my heart.

further back still, the misfortunes of cardinal de Retz, her relation and friend.

† See the letter of the 2d of May.

TO M. DE GRIGNAN.

How have you been able, my dear count, to keep yourself from being pierced through, and utterly consumed, exposed as you have been, the whole winter, to the fire of those eyes, of which your charming wife has given me so humorous a description? A person thus employed may live any where, and every where: and your Provence seems the best adapted of any other place to the exercise of this fine talent; for there are always birds of passage: but where I am, one may perish for want of supplies.

I am delighted with the visit you paid to M. de Louvois. There are certain things respecting which expense should not be regarded: Montanègre has suffered more than you in that way. I conjure you not to let my daughter answer this letter; it is a monster in bulk: but I have nothing to do; I am in perfect health, and it is my greatest pleasure to prattle to her.

LETTER DCXXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 5, 1680.

At length I have the pleasure, at this immense distance from each other, to receive your letters on the ninth day after they are written, with the prospect of happier times before me. I often admire the great kindness and civility of those gentlemen of whom the author of the Moral Essays speaks so humourously, and to whom we are so much indebted. What do they not do for us? To what offices do they not submit, to be useful to us? Some run four or five hundred miles to carry our letters;

others, at the hazard of their necks, climb to the tops of our houses, to prevent our being incommoded by the rains; and others suffer still more. In short, this is an arrangement of Providence; and the thought of gain, which is in itself an evil, becomes thus converted into a source of good.

I have brought a number of the best authors with me, which I have been arranging this morning. There is no looking into one of them, whichever it may be, without a desire to read it through. Some are religious tracts, that do honour to the faith they maintain: others books of history, the best of their kind; besides ethics, poetry, novels, and memoirs. The romances are in disgrace, and banished to a bye-closet. When I enter this little library, I wonder how I am able to leave it again. In short, my child, it is altogether worthy of your presence, and so are my walks; but, for the company, it is very far from being so. There is strange skimming of the pot on Sundays*: one good thing however is, that they sup at six o'clock, and leave me to fly to my lawns and groves for relief. Madame du Plessis, in her deep mourning, never quits me. I could well say of her mother as of M. de Bonneuil, she has left a very ridiculous daughter behind her: she is so impertinent too. I am really ashamed of her regard for me, and I sometimes say to myself, Is it possible there can be any sympathy between her and me? She talks incessantly; but by the grace of God, I am to her, as you are to many others, absolutely dead: I do not hear three words she says. She is at daggers drawn with all her family about her mother's will: this is a new embel-

* On account of the number of visiters, which was always greatest on Sundays, and to whom madame de Sévigné thought herself obliged to do the honours of her house, which she humorously called *skimming her pot.*

lishment to the former beauties of her mind: she confounds the meaning of every thing she says; and, when she is complaining of the ill treatment she receives, she cries, They have used me *like a barbarity, like a cruelty*. You will have me entertain you with such trash, and now I hope you have enough for a time.

My letters are of such an enormous length, that you ought, according to your rule, to make yours to me very short, and leave all the rest to Montgobert. Health is at all times a real and intrinsic treasure, that will serve us on every exigency. Madame de Coulanges has written me a thousand trifles, that I would communicate to you, but that I think it would be absolutely ridiculous. The favour of her *female friend* (madame de Maintenon) still continues. The queen accuses her as the cause of the distance between her and the dauphiness. The king comforts her for this disgrace; she visits him every day, and their conversations are of a length that surprises every body, and gives occasion to numberless conjectures.

I cannot conceive, my dear, how you could think your presence was an obstacle to the fortunes of your brothers; you are not formed to be the image of ill luck. You have not a sufficiently good opinion of yourself; and as to your saying that your fire-side hindered the chevalier from making his court, by rendering him inactive, let me tell you he has only changed fire-sides, and that fortune found him out in his own chamber, muffled up in flannels with the rheumatism. The abbé de Grignan was in despair; he would have given his chance for an old song, when suddenly, by a chain of things too long to tell you now, he is presented, accepted, and actually in possession of one of the prettiest bishoprics in France. How are you now, my dear? this is no bad provision: who knows what may happen?

I consider futurity as a dark road, in which the traveller may find light and accommodation when he least thinks of it.

M. de Lavardin is going to be married* in good earnest; and madame de Mouci† is said to be the person who inspires madame de Lavardin with the idea of doing every thing that can prove advantageous to her son. This de Mouci must certainly have a most extraordinary soul. Young Molac is to marry the duchess of Fontanges's sister; the king gives him to the value of 400,000 francs with her.

How just is your observation upon the death of M. de la Rochefoucault and so many other friends! "The ranks close, and he is seen no more." It is certain that madame de la Fayette is overwhelmed with grief, and cannot feel, as she would have done at another time, the good fortune of her son. The dauphiness was particular in her attentions to her: the princess of Savoy had spoken of her as her best friend.

I am very glad my letter pleased M. de Grignan: I spoke my mind with great sincerity. He must divest himself of all those ruinous whims, which take their turns with him by the quarter. They must not merely sleep, like the nobility of Lower Britany, but be altogether extinct.

Adieu, my beloved child; I admire and love your letters, and yet I will have no more of them; cut short, and leave Montgobert to prattle in your stead. I will try to take from you the desire of writing much: by the length of my letters you shall find them

* To Louise-Anne de Noailles, sister to Anne Juliu
and marshal of France.

† Marie de Harlaie, sister to Achilles de Harlai
torney-general, and afterwards first president of t
Paris.

beyond your strength to answer, which is just what I wish; so shall I be a shield to you. I am of opinion that you have a numerous correspondence upon your hands, say what you will; for my part, I only stand upon the defensive in my answers, I never begin the attack; but then, even these seem of such a bulk, that, on post-days, when I retire to my chamber at night, and see my writing-desk, I am ready to run under the bed, to hide myself, like our late *madame's* little dog, whenever it saw a book.

LETTER DCXXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Whitsunday, June 9, 1680.

So then it seems, that with regard to attention to history, you are what I am with respect to the chaplet*, you cannot tell what Justin treats about. Young de Biais said, that she had seen something of the conversion of St. Augustin at the end of Quintus Curtius; you might say the same, and yet you will not let me say, my daughter *has too much understanding*. As you are not at all the fatter for being ignorant, let me advise you to con over the old lessons of your father Descartes. I wish you could have Corbinelli with you just now; I think he would amuse you. For my part, I find the days insupportably long; I think they have no end: seven, eight, nine o'clock, still broad day! When any of our ladies honour me with their visits, I run immediately to my work, for I do not think them worthy of sharing with me in the pleasures of my walks. When

* See note to the letter of the 12th of May.

their visit is over, I conduct them down stairs, each damsel mounts behind her trusty squire, away they trot to supper, and I return to indulge myself with a walk. I wish to think of God, and I think of you. I wish to tell my beads; I am lost in reverie, and think of you. I send for Pilois, I talk to him about two or three new walks I intend to make; and then, if I feel the least dew, I hurry back into the house, for fear of incurring your displeasure. I read books of devotion, to fit myself for receiving the Holy Spirit: how proper for the purpose is this retreat! But he fills the hearts he pleases, and himself prepares the mansion where he intends to abide: it is he that maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is St. Augustin who says all this. I think both he and St. Paul were perfect Jasenists. The Jesuits have a phantom they call Jansenius, whom they abuse without seeming to know how much higher they strike. *Pray, gentlemen, who speaks to you* *? They set up the voice of opposition and reproach, which rouses the sleeping disciples of these two great saints. I wish I had my poor nuns of Saint-Marie †, as near to me as Vitré. I have no taste for your canting sisters of Aix; for my part, I should be for placing my little girl with her aunt, she will be abbess herself some day. That place is rather equivocal; religion and pleasure are blended together; but you are better able to judge of this than any one. The abbey

* M. de Soyecourt happening to sleep one night in a chamber with three of his friends, the fancy took him to talk so loud to one of them, almost all the night through, that the other two could not get a wink of sleep; upon which one of them said to him angr[illegible] Soyecourt, hold your tongue, there is no sleeping for which M. Soyecourt very coolly replied, "Pray sir, who This answer appeared so droll to madame de Sévigné, that applies it in her letters.

† At Nantes.

may be so small, and the country so disagreeable, that you would be wrong to place her there; otherwise, I think she would be a thousand times better there than at Aix, where you will go no more *. The dear child would be lost to you; and as M. de Vendôme will be governor, she would be quite in despair. There are a thousand things in an abbey to make life pass comfortably. She may go with her aunt to the family-seat, she may go to the baths, she will be my lady abbess's niece. In short, I am of opinion, that this will be the best method of placing her. But what says the archbishop to it? His advice ought to govern your conduct.

Indeed, my child, your opinion of yourself is altogether false and erroneous. What can you mean by decrying an understanding so excellent as yours? Find me another in the world more enlightened, or more alive to reason and duty: and yet, with all this, you delight in perplexing me. You well know your own superiority: you have understanding, judgement, discernment, knowledge, abilities, the gift of insinuation, art when you choose to use it, prudence, discretion, resolution, presence of mind, eloquence, and the power of making yourself beloved whenever you please, and frequently more, much more, than you desire. I could expatiate on this pleasing theme for ever; to sum up the whole in a few words, you have wherewithal to be just what you choose. This material is wanting to many who see every moment the bounds of their understanding: my dear child, complain no longer.

* Madame de Sévigné flattered herself with the belief, that the duke of Vendôme, who was governor of Provence, would command there in person for the future; and that M. and madame de Grignan would return to Paris, and be settled in some situation at court.

I have just received a letter from madam de Vins, in which she speaks of you: you are the bond that links us together. She is buried in law, which is the more disagreeable to her, as the necessary attendance prevents her being at Pomponne. Her prudence at once pleases and affects me. She seems to be melancholy, and as indifferent to those pleasures, which no longer suit her, as she is fully persuaded that it was the order of Providence which reduced her to this state: all her satisfaction is now centred in her family. I sent you a part of one of your brother's letters, by which you will see the real state of his mind. He is at Fontainbleau, where he tells me he is surrounded with pleasure, without being able to taste a moment of joy. Madame de Maintenon grows still more and more in favour, while *Quantova* seems daily to lose ground. Fontanges has reached the summit.

Madame de la Fayette writes me word, that she is pierced more deeply than she thought she was, while she was taken up with the care of her health and her children; but these cares have given place to real grief of heart. She is alone in the world; she regrets the want of my company greatly, as, she says, I should undoubtedly have discharged my duty on this singular occasion. Poor soul! *the rank is closed*, and she can find no one to supply his place.

Rien ne peut réparer les biens que j'ai perdus *.

She sends me this verse, which I have often repeated for her in my mind. She is still in a very bad state of health, which adds to her melancholy. Her two children, as well as Langlade and I, are a[illegible]

* Nothing can restore the blessings I have lost

Paris; all her other friends at Fontainbleau, and madame de Coulanges is on the eve of her departure.

Madame de Lavardin is up to the ears in marriage preparations for her son. I shall make your compliments to her upon the occasion. She writes us word that she is satisfied, but I can perceive the contrary. A daughter-in-law is a restraint upon her: I do not think they will live in the same house together. I am persuaded, she is wounded by the heroic behaviour of madame de Mouci; she will not complain though she is ready to burst. I can see into their hearts. She hints to me, that she intends to spend the remainder of her days in a peaceful retreat at Malicorne. I can read the cards; they promise but an unpleasing game. I can see the embarrassment of the son, distracted between affection and gratitude for his mother, chagrined at the inconsistencies of her temper, hampered with a young wife, and foolishly sacrificing his peace for the sake of his name and family: if I were one of the wedding guests, I could not see more clearly into this matter than I do at present. Believe me, I feel great concern for the different parties, and I make a thousand reflections on all these things when alone in my woods. It is, however, some sort of consolation to me to find, that no one is perfectly happy in this world: *ce que tu vois de l'homme n'est pas l'homme* (what thou seest of man, is not man).

I think, if I had some person to assist me in philosophizing, I should become one of your disciples. I shall have recourse to some book, to endeavour to make use of my reason; but I promise you, it shall not be that of your father Senault. Where could you pick up such jargon? Why do you not abide by the just and simple

* Harsh opinion! "Father Senault," says Voltaire, "is reckoned

reasonings of your father Descartes? I must always have some little story to conduct me: my taste is vulgar like your brother's: abstracted subjects are familiar to you to me they are not so: but this difference in our studies, my child, in nowise affects the union of our hearts; on the contrary it improves it, by making us always new to each other. I shall pray to God, that he will impart to me a portion of his holy Spirit, for I do not presume to request particulars: "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" what else should we say?

When I chide the little marquis, it is to have the pleasure of thinking, that I may provoke some smart reply. I have no idea that any thing can have a better effect than that passage. He is too sedate and settled; he must be roused now and then, even though it be by chiding him without cause.

LETTER DCXXXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 12, 1680.

So, I have written a sermon, without thinking of it! I am as much surprised at this, as the count de Soissons *, when he was told he had made prose. It is true, I feel myself disposed to do all honour to the grace of Christ. I do not cry out, as the queen-mother did in the excess of her zeal against those vile Jansenists, "Ah! fie fie upon grace!" I say the contrary, and can bring good vouchers for it. Since you have imparted to me your

among the first restorers of eloquence. He was f
Rotrou was for Corneille."

* It is singular, that Moliere should have found in
laughable instances of ignorance, with which he
Gentilhomme.

visions, with regard to the fortunes of your brothers-in-law, I will tell you sincerely, that I was afraid the air of a house, where saying grace was sometimes talked of, might have injured the abbé de Grignan. Thank Heaven, I have done no more harm than yourself; and if I am silent for the future, as I ought, and certainly shall be, it will not be from the fear of injuring any one. Your young bishops are seldom suspected of this heresy. I have just been writing to the chevalier; he has absolutely forgotten me, and as he is not infected with the Grignan indolence, it may be a serious business.

Your great building, my dear, is begun to-day: du But will do all he can to hasten the workmen. There was no possibility of beginning sooner, and there is time enough to complete every thing. I send you a letter of madame de Lavardin's, by which you will see what are her sentiments. I am almost tempted to send you likewise a very long letter I have received from madame de Mouci, in which she takes pleasure in acquainting me with every thing she has done relatively to this marriage; she has made choice of me, in preference to any other person, to communicate the whole of her conduct to: she is in the right; the second volume is worthy the admiration of every one who had read the first: she seems happy in taking every opportunity of loading M. de Lavardin with favours, by means of the influence she has over his mother. She has made her give a thousand pounds worth of pearls: she has made her give all the fire-irons, stoves, candlesticks, tables, and silver waiters, that were worth having; handsome tapestry, fine old furniture, with linen and dressing gowns, which madame de Mouci selected herself. Her heart takes this method of avenging itself; but for her, it would have been a mere village wedding. She has made her give considerable estates to the son, and, to crown all, she will

manage so, that the new married couple will not live in the same house with the mother, whose overbearing temper, and rigid observance of hours, would by no means suit the young couple. Madame de Mouci delights in displaying to me the liberality of her soul, and I am amazed to see the extraordinary manner in which she contributes to M. de Lavardin's happiness. The desire of being singular, and of distinguishing ourselves by stepping a little out of the common road, seems to me to be the source of many virtues. She writes me word, that she should be very happy if I were at Paris, because I should understand her; no one else being able to comprehend what she is doing: she adds besides that I should die with laughing, to see the grimaces madame de Lavardin makes, every time the devil of avarice is cast out of her, by the power of her exorcisms. The poor lady seems perfectly exhausted, *like the nuns of Loudun* *. It must certainly be a very comic scene.

I have also received some very entertaining letters from the marchioness d'Huxelles. The fair widows do wonders. Madame de Coulanges assures me, that she is to set out on the 20th for Lyons; she writes me a thousand trifles. This city will become the source of of all the private intelligence of the court; but do you suppose she will communicate any of this precious commodity to the inhabitants?

* Alluding to the *Histoire des Diables de Loudun*, History of the Devils of Loudun. It is well known, that the fierce hatred of cardinal de Richelieu, the manœuvres of the capuchin Joseph, and the cruelty of the judge Laubardement, caused the unfortunate curé Urbain Grandier to perish in the flames, as convicted of the crime of magic, [illegible] the deposition of Ashtaroth devil of the order of Seraphims, [illegible] possessing devils, and Eusas, Cham, Acaos, Zebulan, Ne[illegible] and Acas, of the order of the principalities."—These are [illegible] sentence.

I had a visit the other day from an Augustin friar, a poor creature, a very poor creature indeed. He assumed the airs of a preacher; but I answered his pompous ignorance only with a smile of contempt: he still went on, till at last I was strongly tempted to throw a book at his head. I fancy madame de Coulanges will be ready to reply in the same way to the ladies of Lyons. Young Coulanges will be with you; he has given up M. de Chaulnes and Britany for Lyons and the Grignans. I am quite of his opinion, my dearest child, and my greatest joy would be to make one of your party: ah! how I should like to sup in your delightful grotto! how pleased I should be with M. de Grignan's music, and those beautiful passages in the opera, which have often made my eyes glisten. Oh! it would be a charming party. Your house is a little town; really, to reflect upon our situations and dispositions, it might be supposed some magic change had been wrought upon us; and yet, to the honour of both, you fill your exalted station admirably, and shine as in your proper sphere; while I and my humble fortune seem fitted for the woods and the solitude I inhabit. The truth is, I am assured from whence all this comes; it is necessary to raise our eyes to Heaven, after having long kept them fixed upon the earth.

The other evening one of my people told me, "that it was very warm in the Mall; that there was not a breath of air stirring, and that the moon shone with the finest effect imaginable." I could not resist the temptation, so on I put bonnets, cloaks, capuchines, and all the needless defensatives you could wish; and forth I sallied to the Mall, where the air was as mild as in my own room: I found there a thousand fantastic illusions of the night, black and white friars, linen scattered here and there, black men in one place, others buried upright against trees, little dwarfs who just showed their heads

and concealed the rest of their bodies, priests who dared not approach me, &c. &c. After having laughed heartily at all these figures, and fully convinced ourselves of the true origin of what are called spirits, apparitions, that play their farces in the theatre of our imaginations, we returned to the house without sitting down, or feeling the least dew. I beg your pardon, my dear child, but I thought myself obliged, after the example of the ancients, as the foolish fellow we met in the gardens at Livri used to say, to show this mark of respect to the moon; I assure you I have sustained no injury from it.

There has fallen to me, out of the clouds, one of the prettiest calambour * chaplets in the world; this is doubtless because I tell my beads so well. The best ball to the best player, you know. This chaplet has a cross of diamonds hanging to it, with a death's head of coral; *I have certainly seen that vile face somewhere.* Tell me, I beseech you, how it found its way to me at such a distance? In the mean time, I shall not tell my beads without considerable musings; I am of opinion that it will occasion greater distractions †; I wait your answer on this subject.

Have you heard the story of madame de Saint Pouanges? They concealed it a long time from me, lest it should prevent me from returning to Paris in a carriage. This lady was going to Fontainbleau, for we should let no advantage slip, where she pretended she should be highly entertained: she had a very pretty place at court, was young, and had a taste for all the

* *Calembour*, *calambouc*, or *calambac*, are knots of the [illegible] which the rosin collects and hardens by incorporation. [illegible] held to the fire emits a fine perfume. The aloe-tree grows [illegible] Cochin-China.

† See letter, May 12.

pleasures suitable to her years; she adopted the fashionable mode of setting out at six o'clock in the evening, and driving post, so as to get in about midnight: but listen to the consequences; her carriage was overturned by the way, a piece of broken glass pierced through her stays into her body, and she died of the wound. They write me word from Paris, that she lost her reason, between the pain the surgeons gave her, and the mortification of dying in the bloom of youth. Is not this a curious adventure? If you know it already, it will be ridiculous to tell it you a second time; but it has made a strange impression on my brain. It seems madame de Nevers* has made one, on the greatest head in the world, and has turned another smaller one quite topsy-turvy; but I do not find that this has been attended with any serious consequences.

The king took the sacrament on Whitsunday. Madame de Fontange's influence still continues brilliant and solid; but what are we to think of this friendship? I have received a letter from M. Pomponne, in the midst of his retirement, of which I am more proud than if it had been from amidst all the splendour of St. Germain: it is there he is again become as perfect as at Frêne: ah! how excellent a use does he make of his disgrace, and what charming company he is in!

It is certain, that I could very well have borne with the company of my Agnes†: I should at least have put her out of conceit with her confessor; though, to say the truth, he is not so dangerous as madame de Tallard's. I should have been as little puzzled to explain to her

* Madame de Nevers, the daughter of madame de Thianges, was a perfect beauty. The *greatest head* is the king; but it was not true that he had designs upon her, as it was said she had upon him. The other *smaller head* was the duke, son of the great Condé, who was really very much in love with her.

† See the letters of the 20th and 25th May.

the description you have given me of yourself, as I was to answer it. My dear child, you have merit, wit, and understanding, enough for half a dozen heads; it rests with you to make the best use of such treasures, which it is always good to have in store. I am happy that you are yourself convinced of your love. You do honour to my heart, to trace as you do its steps; I wish you could also hear me talk of yours, and how firmly I calculate upon the solidity of your affections. I read your letters over and over, with sentiments peculiar to myself: they employ me a whole week; I receive them on Monday; I read and answer them till Wednesday: Thursday I wait with impatience for Friday morning, when I receive another packet which supplies me till Sunday; and thus the days pass with me, waiting the arrival of that happy one, which is to give you to my arms, without knowing when it will be.

Mademoiselle du Plessis is in her convent: I had much rather have the company of my night spectres than her. I embrace the little marquis; you do him more service than twenty tutors.

LETTER DCXXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Saturday, June 15, 1680.

I SHALL make no answer to what you say of my letters. I am extremely happy that they please you; had you not told me so, I should have thought them unbearable: I never can muster up courage enough to read one of them through, and I often say to myself, with what nonsense do I pester m[illegible] Sometimes I even repent having written s[illegible] should lay you under a sort of obligation [illegible] in the same way; but let me entreat you, m[illegible]

dulge me in the pleasure of chatting to you, without putting yourself to the trouble of answering. Your last letter exceeded all the bounds of prudence, and the care you ought to take of your health.

You are too good in wishing me more society; but, in fact, I do not want it. I am accustomed to solitude; I have my workmen to amuse me, and the good abbé has his likewise: his taste for buildings and alterations gets the better of his prudence. It does not cost him much indeed, but it would cost him still less to let it alone.

All my delight is in my wood; it is impossible to describe how beautiful it is: I often walk there with my cane and Louison, which is all I desire. In my closet I find such agreeable company, that I often say to myself, This is worthy my daughter; she could not here lay her hand amiss upon a book, there is hardly room left for choice. I have taken up *les Conversations Chrétiennes*, (Christian Dialogues); they are written by an honest Cartesian, who seems to have all your *Recherche de la Vérité* (Inquiry after truth, by heart); which treats of that philosophy, and of the supreme power of God over his creatures, who, as St. Paul says, live, move, and have their being, in Him alone, and by Him know all things. I will let you know if this book is within my comprehension; if not I shall quit it with all humility, renouncing the foolish vanity of appearing wise when I am not so. I assure you, I think like *our brothers;* and were I to express myself in print, I should say so. I know the difference between the language of policy and that of the heart. God is omnipotent, and does what he pleases; that I understand. He wants our hearts, and we will not give them to him; there lies the mystery. But do not discover that of our sisters of Saint-Marie: they

write me word, that they are charmed with the book I lent them †.

You remind me of the foolish answer I made to excuse myself from going to madame de Bret***‡, "that I had but one son:" this made your bishops start. I thought that it had been merely my *heretical air*. I mentioned it to you the other day; I think, however, there appeared something strange in the expression. Heaven be praised, my dear countess, we have done no harm; your brothers could not have been better provided for than at present, even had we been *Molinists*. *Probable opinions*, and the *direction of purposes*, would not have been more advantageous to them in the hotel de Carnavalet than the libertinism of our conversations. I am delighted at it, and have often thought how unjustly we might have suffered on this occasion.

I can make nothing of the affair of M. de la Trousse or madame d'Epinoi, or of the servant who robbed them. I will endeavour to get information on this subject, and will send you the letters. You find that poor madame de Lavardin is quite unhappy: who would have supposed that she would have been otherwise than rejoiced at her son's being married§? But I speak like a fool. It should be our invariable maxim, that human nature can never be happy. Young Chiverni seems to be as much so as any one; you see how he has extricated himself from his misery. Your poor brother, indeed, seems fated never to be happy in this world; as to the other world, if we may judge by appearances, I see no proba-

† See Letter, May 25.

‡ Apparently, madame de Bretonvilliers, whom the Memoirs of the times represent as the over-officious friend of the archbishop of Paris de Harlai, who was not so timid a priest, as he was a rigid Molinist.

§ See the preceding Letter.

bility of his being in the right road. The bishop of Chalons is certainly in heaven, for he was a devout prelate, and a virtuous man. You see all our friends are lost to us one after another.

I wrote the other day to madame de Vins, that I would leave her to guess what sort of virtue I practised most here; and informed her it was liberality. It is certain, that I have given away very considerable sums since my arrival: eight hundred francs one morning, one thousand another, five hundred another, one day three hundred crowns: you may think I am jesting, but it is too true. I have farmers and millers who owe me these sums, and have not a farthing to pay me with. What is to be done in this case? Why I make a virtue of necessity, and forgive them the debts. You will readily believe, that I make no great merit of this since it is forced liberality; but my head was full of it when I wrote to madame de Vins, and so down it went on the paper. I endeavour to make the fines pay for it. I have not yet touched one of the six thousand francs from Nantes; money-matters are not soon settled. The other day I had a visit from a pretty little wife of a farmer of Bodégat, with sparkling eyes, fine person, and smartly dressed in a holland gown, with ruffled cuffs, and a long train. Good heavens! thought I, when I saw her, I am ruined: for you must know, her husband owes me eight thousand francs. M. de Grignan would certainly have fallen in love with this woman; she is the very image of one he admired at Paris. This morning a countryman came in with bags on all sides, some under his arms, some in his pockets, and some in his breeches, which he began to untie, for in this country they dress in a strange way; the fashion of buttoning the lower part of the jacket is not yet introduced here; they are very saving of the stuff of which their breeches

are composed, and from the gentry of Vitré down to my clodpole, every thing is in the highest state of negligence. The good abbé, who, you know, loves the main chance, seeing the fellow so loaded, thought we were rich for ever. "Upon my word, friend, you are bravely loaded, how much money do you bring us?" "Please your reverence," answered the man, "I think there is a matter of thirty francs." My dear child, I believe all the *doubles** in France were collected to fill these bags. In this manner do they abuse our patience and forbearance.

You give me great pleasure by what you say of Montgobert. I thought, indeed, what I wrote to you upon her account was superfluous, and that your excellent understanding would reconcile every thing. In this manner, my child, you ought always to act, in spite of momentary vexations. Montgobert has an excellent heart, though her temper is rather too hasty and impetuous: I always honour the goodness of her heart. We are frequently obliged to bear with the little dependencies and circumstances of friendship, though they may sometimes be disagreeable. I shall some day send her a bad cause to defend at Rochecourbiere; since she has a talent for these things, it ought to be exercised. You will have M. de Coulanges with you; who will be a capital performer. He will inform you of his views and expectations, I know nothing of them myself; he dreads solitude so much, that he will not even write to any one who lives in it. Grignan, therefore, is a place perfectly qualified to charm him, as he himself is to charm others: I never met with such delightful society, it is the object of all my wishes: I think of you all incessantly; I read your letters over

* Small pieces of money, of which about five are equal to an English penny.

and over again, saying as at Livri: Let us see what my daughter said to me a week or ten days ago; for, in short, it is she who converses with me, and I thus enjoy "the ingenious art of painting language, and of talking to the eyes."

You know it is not the retired groves at the Rocks that make me think of you; I thought of you as much in the midst of the bustle of Paris. You are fixed in the centre of my heart; every thing else is transient; it passes and is forgotten. I have forgotten even my Agnes, and yet she is very amiable; her wit has something of the simplicity of the country in it: but that of madame de Tarente is still in the high courtly taste. The roads from hence to Vitré are grown so intolerably bad, that the king and M. de Chaulnes have ordered them to be repaired. All the peasants of that barony will be assembled there on Monday next.

Adieu, my dearest! when I tell you that my affection is of no use to you, do you not understand in what way I mean, and to what my heart and imagination tend? Pray tell me if you intend to place our little girl at Aix with her aunt *, and to send Paulina away. The dear child is a perfect prodigy; her understanding and wit are a sufficient portion for her: will you then place her on a level with a common person? I should always take her with me wherever I went, and should never think of sending her to Aix with her sister †. In short, I should treat her, as she merits, extraordinarily.

* Marie Adhemar de Monteil, sister of M. de Grignan, and one of the nuns of Aubenas, a town and convent of the Lower Vivarez. See the Letter of 9th June.

† Marie Blanche, the eldest sister of Paulina, was in the nunnery of St. Marie of Aix, where a short time afterwards she took the veil.

LETTER DCXXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 19, 1680.

WHAT weather have you in the country, my dear? Your parties in the grotto make it appear as if it were very fine. With us it is dismal; it is unseasonably cold and wet. I wear a quilted night-gown, have a fire in my room every evening; the Carthage of my woods (her plantations) is entirely stopped, and yet the days are as long as those of the month of May. But do not wish me to have any company; I want none, but what I know I cannot have. Such weather cannot certainly last long, at this time of the year; I shall therefore resume my reading and writing till it is over. Your charming letters afford me an employment infinitely more precious than any other. I have a great distaste to those silly conversations, which are made up of *sees* and *hearsays*, and such idle stuff, in which we cannot possibly take any interest. I am much better pleased with the *Christian Dialogues* which I have mentioned to you before. I am certain you must be acquainted with the book; it is the whole of *your father's* philosophy adapted to christianity; it proves the existence of a God, without the help of faith. I have heard you talk so often on this subject with Corbinelli and La Mousse, that the conversation is imprinted on my mind, and enables me to understand these dialogues better than I should otherwise do. I will let you know if my capacity lasts to the end of the book.

You make an admirable use of your *Metamorphoses*; I shall read them over again with your idea. If my memory had served me, I might have made a very na-

rural application of the ravages of Erisichton in the groves of Ceres *, to those my son has committed in my woods at Buron †. I fear he will copy the example of that monster in every thing, and at length be reduced to eat himself. You are not so madly extravagant as he is; for there is at least some show of reason for the terrible expense you are at in servants, housekeeping, dress, equipage, and other things, in which, at the same time, you do not go so far as M. de Grignan would wish you to do. We need not apply to M. de Luxembourg's friends ‡ to discover the cause of your uneasiness. But, as to my son, no one would imagine he had a sixpence in the world: he makes no presents, gives no entertainments, keeps no mistress, cannot afford a horse to attend the king or the dauphin when they hunt, never dares play for a louis-d'or; and yet, if you knew what immense sums of money pass through his hands, you would be astonished. I compare him to the gnats of your country, who do much mischief, without being heard or seen. Indeed, indeed, my dear, I have not given all my capacity to my children: I do not pretend to any great cleverness, but I am prudent and docile. You would do still better than I do, were you not hurried away by a torrent, which there is no resisting. I hope, with you, that this torrent may bring you to Paris; this hope is the support and comfort of my heart. You

* Ovid's Metamorphoses, book viii. fab. 2.

† See Letter 27th of May.

‡ Meaning the pretended conjurors and fortune-tellers, whom M. de Luxembourg, and several other persons of the highest distinction in the French court, had the curiosity to consult, before the king issued his declaration of the 11th of January 1680, against persons guilty of poisoning, and pretenders to soothsaying and the black art, on account of the famous La Voisin, who was burnt the 22d of February 1680, for having poisoned several persons, and practised sorcery.

have yet several resources, and, if you are as well in health as you say you are, I see nothing that can prevent your return.

LETTER *DCXXXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, June 19, 1680.

I was detained at Nantes for a month by business. I have only been here in quiet for a fortnight. I write, my dear cousin, that I may obtain some intelligence of you and of the amiable widow. I lament that I should be here, when you are both in Paris. We are in good tune when we are together. Our conversation seldom flags, and Corbinelli contributes his share towards its support. I am here in perfect solitude; and, considering how little I am accustomed to solitude, I bear my retirement tolerably well. Reading is a great comfort to me. I have a little library here which would be worthy of you; but you would be still more worthy of me, and, if we were neighbours, we would establish a free intercourse of mind and books. On this subject I must return, as usual, to Providence, who has placed us where it has thought fit. It is difficult to comprehend, that a young lady of Burgundy, brought up at court, should have wandered into Britany; but Providence has so well disposed of the rest, that I always honour it, and regard with reverence all its dispensations. The road it has marked out for you, has been rugged and painful: I feel it perhaps more than I ought; but after all, we must submit to what is bitter, as well as to what is sweet.

These are the true reflections of a person who passes

a portion of her life, alone, in the midst of woods, where the thoughts can only be gloomy and solid.

If I am fortunate enough to find you in Paris at my return, you will console me for all my dulness, you will rejoice my heart, and enlighten my mind. Amiable father and daughter, I embrace you both!

LETTER * DCXXXIX.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, June 26, 1680.

It is odd that on Wednesday last I should complain to our friend Corbinelli, that you had not written to me since you had been in Britany, and that I should receive your letter the very next day. If you had been at Paris, madam, my reproaches could not have travelled to you with greater rapidity.

You are right, my dear cousin, in saying that we must submit to the orders of Providence. We should be great fools if we were to reason upon its conduct; but I mean no impiety when I say, that I should have been glad if it had ordained me to pass my life with you, or at least in your neighbourhood. It was long before I would believe, that the evils it had occasioned me, in destroying my fortune, were for my advantage, as my directors told me. But I have been convinced of it for these three years; I do not say for my advantage in the other world only, but for my repose in this. God has already recompensed me in some degree, by the resignation he has given me; and I now apply to this excellent Master what in the folly of my youth I addressed to love:

Il paye en un moment un siècle de travaux,
Et tous les autres biens ne valent pas ses maux.
An age of woe he in a moment fills,
All other blessings are not worth his ills.

I am happy to find that those who know me, think me deserving of honours; I care very little what those* may think who do not know me: and soon the sentiments of both will be very indifferent to me, when I shall be in the other world.

LETTER DCXL.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Friday, June 21, 1680.

The bad weather still continues; there is no stirring out without being wet to the skin. Sometimes, indeed, we fix our faith and hopes upon St. John, and venture to step in between two clouds, and walk a few paces, when they close again, and pour their contents on our presumptuous heads. This has happened to us two or three times; and therefore, to guard against it in the future, we mean to go armed with hats, cloaks, riding-hoods, and bonnets, and to fix a kind of tent at the end of the great walk by the mall, and another at the end of the long walk, where we may sit under cover, and read, play, talk, and amuse ourselves. You have now all the news of our woods: I have a great inclination to send them to the Mercure Gallant *.

What you say of that paper is truly laughable; I thank you for the extract you have sent me. If I thought I could again find in it the handsome mademoiselle de Sévigné, and the entertainment on board the galley, which M. de Vivonne did *not* give to the countess de Grignan, I would be at the expense of purchasing it; but as I am at the same time afraid I shall not meet with a description of the entertainments at

* A newspaper of the fashionable world.

your Rochecourbiere, I shall content myself with borrowing it at Vitré.

I wonder you should say the device * is not as applicable to you as to the dauphiness. I perhaps enter into your meaning; it requires, you think, a person who has a great share of wit. I do not mean to praise you, but it is truly suited to you; and there is a very gallant turn in the thought, that there are more charms within than without: be not then ungrateful to honest Clement, for nothing can be happier. I retract what I said when writing in a hurry: you have convinced me that I was to blame in making a jest of the count of Oldenbourg†; for, as you say, are we not sufficiently accustomed to German names? This, however, cannot be one of your friends, as he always resided in Sweden; but the name was not at all harsh, it was the wicked freedom of my pen that made it so. Here is another jest for you. My maids, seeing me very much busied with the chaplet ‡, took it into their heads to have a little amusement, by writing me the letter which I enclose you, and which succeeded so well, that they were as much frightened, as we were once at Frêne, by a trick which Scudery resented rather too severely; do you remember it? They saw me send you the letter, and were divided between a strong desire to laugh, and the fear of offending me. "Good God!" says Helen, "would you make a jest of my mistress?" "It is only for amusement," says Mary, "it will make the countess laugh." At length, after fidgeting about me a considerable time, till they thought they had found the lucky minute, they confessed, that they had got Demonville to write the letter, and hoped I would take it, as it was meant, merely

* Il piu grato nasconde. † See Letters of 3 May, and 31 May.
‡ See Letter of 12 June.

as a jest, and not send it to you; that for three nights they had not had a wink of sleep, for fear I should be angry with them, and concluded with asking my pardon. So you see your mother is returned to the follies, which used to divert you so much at Livri, and which I heartily wish may divert you again. You have therefore only to inform me, why you sent me this chaplet, of which I know nothing, and I will immediately return you my thanks. If you wish it, I can cite M. de la Rochefoucault, who was as easily deceived as myself; but he had so much merit in other respects, that I cannot, with justice, draw a comparison or consolation from him.

Have you seen the Flanders gazette? It is enough to make you despise all human wisdom, since we are not exempt from the malice of fortune even after death. "M. de la Rochefoucault," says this gazette, "has left behind him a paper, in which he declares, that Gourville has always served him faithfully and usefully, and that he heartily repents not having left to him the whole management of his grandson's marriage with mademoiselle de Louvois, respecting which he was deceived." Can any thing be more ridiculous than this assertion, come from what quarter it will? It is absolutely diabolical.

I am informed that the conversations between the king and madame de Maintenon increase more and more; that they last from six o'clock till ten; that the daughter-in-law sometimes makes a visit there, but a very short one; that she generally finds each of the two parties in an elbow-chair, and that after the visit is over, they resume the thread of their discourse. My friend* writes me word, that no one approaches the

* Madame de Coulanges.

lady but with respect and homage, and that the ministers make their court to her, as others do to them *. Madame de la Sabliere in her incurables is perfectly cured of one disorder which was for a long time thought incurable †; a cure which brings with it more real satisfaction than any other would have done. She is at present in a very happy state of mind: is religious, truly so, and makes a proper use of her free will. But is it not God, who has wrought this change in her heart? Is it not God, who has given her this will? Is it not God, who has delivered her from the power of the demon? Is it not God, who has caused her to walk, and has directed her footsteps in the right way? Is it not God, who has inspired her with a desire to be wholly his? The work is completed; God has thus crowned with success the gifts he has been pleased to impart. If this is what you call free will, Heaven, in its mercy, make me a partaker of it. We shall resume St. Augustin: I return to my friend.

She is to bring madame de la Fayette to visit this amiable convert; this may, perhaps, be the only way to convince madame de la Fayette that her grief may admit of a cure. Hitherto she appears to me totally insensible to every thing else, even to what relates to her son ‡; but who knows what is in store for her? This I often say with regard to the baron: How would you have me marry him? He is at present attached to his

* Louvois, and Marsillac then duke de la Rochefoucault, had endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between the king and madame de Montespan. They wished to ruin madame de Maintenon. But Lewis related the whole to her. She herself wrote two months after: "This explanation has fixed the king . . . he owns that M. de Louvois is a more dangerous man than the prince of Orange." This makes us feel madame de Sévigné's expression in all its force.

† She had been passionately in love with M. de la Fare.

‡ See Letter of 6 May.

fat cousin de V****, of whom he speaks very humorously; this is a good way to make his fortune! See how that little insignificant Chiverni has found the way to insinuate himself so effectually into the good graces of madame de Colbert, that he is to marry her niece. Depend upon it, you will soon find that fine estate of his taken from nurse, all his debts paid, and himself out of danger of a prison, which would otherwise most assuredly have been his lot. But what can be said to all this? It is the will of Providence. I see so much waywardness in your brother's destiny, that I cannot bear to speak or think of it. I see no dear little grand-children likely to come from that quarter; but I see yours already come, beautiful as the day; and I see that your health is improved; this delights me: but I entreat you, my dearest child, not to make a bad use of this amendment, and always to have before your eyes the danger of a relapse.

I have no other answer to make you upon what St. Augustin says, except that I hear and understand him, when he tells me, and repeats to me five hundred times in the same book, that all things depend, as the apostle says, "not on him that willeth, nor on him that runneth, but on God, that showeth mercy to whom it pleaseth him; that it is not for any merit in man, that God bestows his grace, but according to his own good pleasure; that man may not glory in his own strength, seeing he receives all things from God." His whole book is in this strain, filled with passages from scripture, the writings of the apostle Paul, and the homilies of the church. He calls our free will, a deliverance, and an aptitude to love God, because we are no longer under the dominion of the devil, and are chosen from all eternity, according to the decrees of the Almighty before all ages. When I read in this book the following pas-

sage, "How could God call men to judgement, if they were not free agents?" I confess I am at a loss to understand it, and am disposed to think it a mystery: but as free will cannot put our salvation in our own power, and as we must always be dependent on God, I have no desire to understand it better, and will endeavour, as much as possible, to remain in a state of humility and dependence. If you have *la Predestination des Saints* (the Predestination of the Saints), read it, my child, and you will find much more on this subject, than I can possibly say to you.

We have a little Huguenot girl here, who pretends that infants, who die without being baptised, may enter the kingdom of heaven, in virtue of the faith of their parents. "Surely," said I to her, "you are not in earnest? Can a child of Adam, can any portion of that corrupt mass, see and know God? There would be no occasion for a Redeemer, if we could go to heaven without this mediation. Indeed, young lady, this is downright heresy." This startled my little Huguenot. I readily gave up to her the abuses and superstitions that had crept into religion; I did not urge the doctrine of the holy sacrament; I contented myself with declaring, that I was ready to die for the existence of Christ. I asked her, why she rejected the invocation of saints, when those of her religion recommended to pray for each other. In short, this little dispute revived my spirits, when I was as dull as the grave; for she came with madame de la Hamélinière, whose husband is a relation of yours. This madame de la Hamélinière is a species of beauty, that you have formerly seen at Paris. She has a gallant, with whom she is under no sort of restraint; she is sometimes two or three months together at his house. She goes with him to Paris and Bourbon as one of his family, and his equipage attends her

every where. She is at present here, driving six fine greys; the coach, coachman, and horses, are all the marquis's; her whole conversation is about him. She is very seldom with her husband, whose estate, by the bye, is under sequestration for debt; for your good cousin has contrived to ruin himself, like a fool as he is. This woman, who has nothing to do, spends all her time in visits. She has darted from a distance of twenty leagues, and fallen upon this house like a bomb, when I least expected her. I fled to my woods, to delay, as long as I could, the punishment I was to undergo; I was, however, obliged to return, and I found in my house this fine personage, whom I hardly knew, with a retinue equal to that of madame de Chevigni at Frêne: a little girl, a young lady, curled and powdered to the top of her head (the Huguenot I have been speaking of), and another awkward creature. I was at first in one of my humours, to say a thousand rude things in spite of myself; to throw down a chair, and make fifty ridiculous apologies and compliments. "Pray, madam, excuse me! Surely madam, you would not have me go first!" and so on. At length we sit down to supper, and to stop the continual yawnings with which I am seized, I amuse myself with disputing with the Huguenot, which effectually rouses me. This woman has been stationed here these three days, so that I now begin to be somewhat used to her; but I hope that as she has not sense enough to be pleased with the freedoms I take, of doing whatever I please, and of leaving her to herself, to go and superintend my workmen, or to write, she will be offended, and give me the felicity of an adieu, which is so pleasing when we have had, and so mortifying when we have good, company. Such is the troop I have quartered upon me at present, and of whom I shall be rid when God pleases. Of this, however, I can assure you;

that I shall not entreat them to stay. I beseech you, my child, to send me no answer to all this. I love to gossip; it is my heart's desire.

Mademoiselle du Plessis is still in her convent; if you knew how she acted the afflicted daughter, and how she stole the casket while her mother was dying, you would smile at the manner in which virtues and vices are thrown indiscriminately together in these provinces: for I found the souls of the country-people as straight as a line, loving virtue as naturally as horses trot. The hand which throws this medley into the universe, knows perfectly well what it does, and turns every thing to its own glory; all is for the best. M. de la Garde will say more to you on this subject than I can. He is extremely pleasant: he has written me a long and friendly letter, in which he tells me he is going to see you. I do not think he has finished his business: if you were to ask me what business, you would puzzle me extremely.

LETTER DCXLI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, June 26, 1680.

What makes me think the days so tediously long, is that they are at the same time cold and disagreeable. We made two noble fires before the gates on Midsummer eve and the next day; there were at least thirty faggots and a pyramid of brush-wood consumed, which would seem like ostentation fires, but in truth it was a very economical fire, for it served the whole family to warm themselves by. There is no going to bed now without a fire in the room, and we have all resumed our winter garments. This will last as long as it pleases God. You are not liable to these unseasonable winters; for

as soon as your north-easterly winds have done blowing, the warm weather returns, and the pleasures of Rochecourbière are no longer interrupted.

Do you know how Montgobert writes? She writes as we do; her letters are very pleasing. In her last she mentioned to me a breakfast she was to give in her apartment, at which you were to come in by chance; this is very pleasantly turned. Make her write for you, my dear child, and converse with me at your ease. This would do me more good than you can imagine. I send you the following question to discuss at Rochecourbière: Whether the satisfaction I feel in seeing as little of your writing as possible, be a mark of affection or indifference? I recommend this point to Montgobert*. I am charmed with every mark of your confidence, and it is no small one, to believe firmly, that I prefer your ease to my own pleasure; which becomes a pain, when I reflect how injurious writing must be to you.

I take walks here, which make me feel the bitterness of your absence much more severely, than it is possible you can feel mine, in the midst of your little republic; for assuredly the company at Grignan is so brilliant and select, that it must cause you more dissipation than if you were in the midst of Paris. Your little edifice is finished; you will have an account of it sent to you Do you wish to know the sequel of madame de la Hamélinière†? she was here a week, and did not go away till yesterday, after I had taken my medicine. I envy her the six fine grey horses that paraded it in my court. The easy familiarity of this woman is unprecedented; she is gone back to the marquis at Roche[illegible] whence she came in his equipage, and talk[illegible]

* See Letter of 15 June.

† See the former Letter.

but him. Your good cousin* doats on her, notwithstanding all this, and upon the marquis too. I assure you I am heartily pleased to be rid of all this train. I was in bed when they went off, but the noise they made let me fully into the secret. Heaven preserve me from any more such visits! I have a thousand things to do, and a great deal to read; for there was no such thing as even mentioning a book before such company. I shall now return to my Dialogues†, that are full of the spirit of *your father*. Once more, my dear child, let me entreat you to peep into St. Augustin's work, *The Predestination of the Saints*, and *The Gift of Perseverance*. It is very short, and comprises every thing in a few pages. You will see in it how the popes and the councils refer to that father, whom they call the doctor of grace; next the letters of Prosper and Hilarius, in which mention is made of the difficulties of certain priests of Marseilles, who talked like you, and who were called *Semipelagians*‡. Observe St. Augustin's answers to these two letters, and how often he repeats it. The eleventh chapter of the *Gift of Perseverance* fell into my hands yesterday; pray read it; read the whole book, it is not long: it is from thence I took all my errors; but my comfort is, that I am not alone.

I should be very happy in these woods if I had a singing leaf: what a pretty thing is a singing leaf! and how dull it is to wander in shades where the leaves are all dumb, and no voice is heard but that of owls! But I am an ungrateful creature, for I hear the voices of a thousand charming birds every morning. You have none where you are; and you have nothing to do, as

* M. de la Hamélinière.

† See Letter of the 15th June.

‡ The council of Orange, held in 539, condemned the opinions of the Semipelagians as erroneous.

you said the other day, but to observe on which side the wind blows. Your terrace must certainly be very pleasant; I am very often there with you all, and my imagination is never at a loss where to find you in that delightful and noble principality.

It seems that my son is not at court, though he is at Fontainbleau. I have advice from several quarters, that he is almost always in a *great* house, which he seems to like so well, that he scarcely ever stirs out of it. I need not tell you, that is not the way to curry favour at court, and that such conduct must make him ridiculous. The Flanders journey is fixed: if the dauphin's * go, there will be an additional expense, that no one dreamt of.

The chevalier has written me a very good and civil letter. I have made reparation to the bishop d'Evreux; I have nothing more to ask of these Grignans. As to the eldest brother, the case is different; I shall always have something to say to him, as long as he keeps my daughter at such a distance from me. By this time I fancy the archbishop must be with you, and that you are more disposed than ever to enjoy such excellent society. I find you have lost M. Rouillé; you will miss him; but you will have, however, no further occasion for him, the instant the lieutenant-general gives up the place to the governor †. I already enjoy in imagination the coadjutor at the head of that assembly, with a new governor, and a new intendant; he will do wonders; in my opinion this will be of great advantage to you. The star is changed, and the charm upon the fate of the Grignans dissolved; the eldest may [illegible] come in for his share: neither good nor ill [illegible]

* The dauphin's gendarmes.

† The duke de Vendome.

long duration in this country; I except prisoners and exiles, who may be said to be out of the world.

Madame de Vins writes me word, that she is delighted with the little circuit we make round her. You write to her about me, she writes to you on the same subject. I write to her of you, and she does the same to me in return; so that, as she very prettily observes, we revolve round her. She is at Pomponne, studying *your father's* philosophy. It has so happened, that Corbinelli, through me, has recommended an admirable master to them, to teach their eldest son the law: he is a man of astonishing knowledge and capacity, and his temper and morals are every thing that could be wished: the whole family are delighted with him; the amiable marchioness profits not a little by his instructions. I think her extremely happy in possessing so much rationality, and that she is not subject to hang herself.

Madame de Mouci writes me word, that she is persuaded madame de Lavardin will never accommodate herself to the young couple; she expected them to-day; they were to return from court; she was quite uneasy at being put out of her way, for she is altogether wrapped up in herself. I know another mother, who, with reason, counts herself as nothing, and is wholly transfused into her children, knowing no greater joy than what she tastes in her own family. I can truly say, that this mother loves her daughter perfectly, but this is not the fashion of Britany.

I am told that M. de Chiverni, I must say Clermont, that you may not mistake who I mean, will, in the course of two years, be one of the greatest noblemen in France; thus does fortune delight to sport with mankind. I no longer hear any thing about Molac's marriage. I am very glad they did not have the little girl from Pomponne; they would have destroyed her, in

teaching her to behave like the daughter of a disgraced minister.

God continue to you, my child, the good and solid understanding with which he has endowed you. You talk so wisely upon pleasures, and things you have it not in your power to possess, that not all the philosophy of Christianity can teach you more:

"J'en connois de plus misérables*."

You are, indeed, truly lovely and estimable, and as truly beloved and esteemed.

LETTER DCXLII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, June 30, 1680.

I HAVE not found this month so very long as the last; it is because I have not seen so many different places, but have been confined to these woods, where the imagination is less distracted. I make a thousand reflections in my retreat, both on the Holy Spirit, which I wait with impatience to receive, more persuaded than ever that it bloweth where it listeth; and likewise on several other subjects, which will but too often intrude upon me.

My thoughts are very similar to yours, with regard to my son; his sentiments, his temper, and disposition, in the place where he is, are matters as difficult to form

* "There are persons more wretched than I am." The last line of the famous song of Job, by Benserade, which madame de Sévigné here applies to herself.

It was this sonnet which, having appeared at the [illegible] of Voiture to Urania, divided the whole court into [illegible], called the Jobelins and the Uranians. The Uranians were [illegible] and had madame de Longueville at their head.

a just opinion of, as the excessive joy madame de Lavardin seemed to feel on account of her son's marriage, to those who did not know her. This is one of the ways in which Providence sports with our weakness, to give us a due sense of the fallaciousness of our judgements. There is no pleasure my son might not enjoy where he is. I am certain the chevalier would render him a thousand good offices, if he were disposed to avail himself of them. If he were not there, he would be half-mad to get there. You, my dear child, are wiser and more prudent; you endeavour to be pleased with what you have, and to despise what you have not. This is a philosophy that would have sold very dear at Lucian's auction. You say that all the apparent happiness of others is in reality misery: you view it on the most disagreeable side, and endeavour not to place your own happiness on any thing that does not depend on yourself. I frequently study this passage in your letters; nothing I read can be of more service to me, though I am a little ashamed to find you so much wiser than myself.

My son writes me word, that he is going to play at reversis with his young master*: this makes my blood run cold within me; two, three, or four hundred pistoles are lost before we can look round us. "This is nothing for Admetus, but a great deal for him." If people, before they play, would think that they may possibly lose a great deal, and that debts of honour must be paid immediately, they would not be so ready to engage in such parties; but the misfortune is, that every one thinks he shall win, and this leads him on to destruction. If Dangeau is one of the party, he will carry off every thing; for he is a perfect harpy at play. However, it will all turn out as it shall please God, and so it

* The dauphin.

will be with the 6000 francs which I expected to receive from Nantes, and in which a demon has interfered in the shape of a point of law, that throws us as far back as ever.

I perceive, by several letters, that the confined and retired way of life of the young princess* is by no means agreeable to her taste or inclination; and, were it not for the docility of her temper and her extreme wish to oblige, must be called a restraint: indeed, who knows what passes in the most beautiful place in the universe? That of Danae † is another wonder: it is certain that the golden shower falls most plenteously. None of her sisters equal her in beauty, but they will be very handsomely provided for.

Madame de Mouci appears to me to wish for no greater advantage than that of being the most admirable and romantic person existing ‡. Do we not know a certain princess, who made all the haste she could to get her lover a wife, that she might no longer have an inclination to marry him herself, and to put an end to every thing at once? this is the counterpart. She takes a pleasure in doing extraordinary things; and I would not swear, that, instead of being present at the wedding, she would not go to Malicorne, to soothe the griefs of madame de Lavardin. Nothing can furnish greater matter of reflection than the situation of this mother: see what feelings Providence gives us to trouble our felicity! I thank you for having written to her. But what is Montgobert doing? She suffers you to write a long letter, in which you do not mention a syllable of your health, and you know of what consequence that subject is to me. Madame de Vins is alway[illegible]

* The dauphiness. † Madame de Fo[illegible]

‡ See Letter of the 12th June.

one here; she is an amiable creature; I often think of her. She shows me a great degree of friendship, and speaks to me of you with infinite tenderness. She is far from being a bundle of thorns; she is very good to her friends, and has their interest always at heart. Hers is a melancholy fate; but she was not without uneasiness at court, so that you lament too much her being with her family; it is her natural inclination; she is accustomed to it. The solidity of her understanding is of great service to her in the present exigence: has she not informed you what use she makes of it, and that she is learning your philosophy? Her husband, it seems, has paid tribute to the eyes of madame D****. You will give her some lessons on the method of being jealous. I am far from pitying ladies of that disposition; they have always materials to work upon.

Guitaut has written to me at the distance of three leagues from Fontainbleau, where he is gone to bully the court, and see all the Caumartins, and the wedding, in a fine house belonging to the bride. They have been there three days.

Our dear friend M. de Pomponne is happy; he is wholly taken up in devotion. How admirably do you speak of him! What is left for me to add, but that we are examples of the wretchedness and weakness of mankind? Eternity has something in it more awful to me than to you, because I approach nearer to it than you do; but the thought of this does not give me a greater degree of love for God.

I am perfectly convinced that misfortunes and vexations are plentifully scattered over the whole face of the earth. Corbinelli is of the same opinion. He put a very curious question to me the other day, "Which is the happiest, the lover who is uncertain whether he is loved by the object of his wishes, or the lover who is

perfectly convinced of being so?" I replied, that the former was the happiest; perceiving that he was in jest, and meant to show that all men are alike happy and miserable. I cannot tell whether M. de Luxembourg would be of this opinion; for I imagine he is rather uneasy at being in disgrace and banishment, by not having provided against a change of this kind.

I have just found a letter from madame de Coulanges, that I had not read before, in which she tells me, that she is going to Lyons; that she does not intend to pass by Fontainbleau; that she has resumed her country humour; that the king was the other day three hours with madame de Maintenon at her own house, that lady being indisposed with the head-ache; that father La Chaise goes there sometimes; that madame de Fontanges weeps like a Niobe, at being no longer beloved, and that the most splendid establishments have no power to soothe her griefs! This is worthy of being put into our bag of reflections.

You know that cardinal d'Etrées is going to Rome on the affair of the *regale* (revenues of the vacant bishoprics), on which the pope has written a letter to the king, worthy the pen of St. Peter himself. It is said, that his majesty grows weary of the archbishop of Paris *, and his mode of life, so that, in all probability, he will be cast off like the mistresses.

It is droll enough in me to send you news; but as

* Francis de Harlai, archbishop of Paris. He led, in reality, a very scandalous life, but he was far from being disgraced. About six years afterwards, he performed the summary and priv[illegible] ceremony of the marriage of the king with madame de Maintenon. [illegible] thing for which he deserved praise, which is, for h[illegible] revocation of the edict of Nantes; and if he aft[illegible] the king publicly upon the occasion, it was not so [illegible] as it was said to be.

none is stirring here, I am glad to talk of what I receive from others: I can tell you something, however, which is of more consequence. The princess de Tarente is arrived. M. and madame de Chaulnes will be at Rennes in a week. M. de Chaulnes has given orders for repairing the roads between this and Vitré, and these are between two and three hundred men, with the seneschal at their head, employed in making them *like this room**, in which they have the advice and counsel of our coachmen.

Yesterday a young man came here from Vitré, whom I knew to have lived formerly as footman with M. Coulanges. M. de Grignan has seen him at Aix. He showed me a printed list of the feats he performed with fire; he has the secret of the man you have heard spoken of at Paris. Among a thousand wonderful things that he did, and which I am astonished the government permits, on account of the consequences, I was struck with one in particular, which is soon done; this was the letting fall from his hand into his mouth ten or twelve drops of flaming sealing-wax, with which he appeared to be no more affected than if it had been so much cold water; he did not make the least grimace, or sign of uneasiness, and his tongue looked as fair and unhurt after the operation as before. I have often heard of these fire-eaters; but I must confess, that to see the thing performed in my own room, and under my very eye, struck me with astonishment. This proves your philosophy, my dear child; and I am convinced that fire is not hot, and that the sense of heat we feel from it, is owing to the particular disposition of the parts of our bodies. Do you know, that there is a certain kind of liquor with which we may rub ourselves, and then, with perfect security, drop hot sealing-wax upon the tongue,

* See Letter of 31 May.

swallow boiling oil, or walk unhurt over red-hot iron? What will become of our miracles?

The dauphiness amuses herself with hunting wild beasts. She did not seem in such a hurry to come hither to catch them; you see how inclinations change. This gives occasion to talk about Madame, who otherwise would be forgotten; but it is probable that these hunting-matches may bring about a coalition between the two branches of the house of Bavaria, so naturally upon a bad footing with each other.

I have begun my little book again; it affords me a great entertainment: I am persuaded you have read it. I embrace you, my dearest, and take my leave of you much against my will. Notwithstanding the veil that hangs over your destiny, I trust we shall meet again this winter.

You say, you know not what to do with my praises, and that they make you uncomfortable: this is not my fault; I should have contented myself with thinking of them only, had you not taken it into your head to write so many vile things of yourself, without considering how dear you are to me; but I was resolved to repel the injury, and for once to tell you the truth.

LETTER DCXLIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, July 3, 1680.

I SINCERELY pity you, my dear child, for having been pestered with such disagreeable comp[illegible]. The [illegible] are not quite so troublesome as th[illegible] expected. Ours* arrived on Monday, [illegible] to rest herself till to-morrow. When I [illegible]

* The princess de Tarente.

house is filled with your own large family, with accidental visitors, with music, and all the pleasures of which M. de Grignan is so fond, I cannot help thinking that you must be at a vast expense, and that it is far from being a place of much repose and quiet to you.

I am always receiving dismal letters from my son, who calls his bondage and his slavery, what any other person but himself would consider as a pleasure and advantage. If I could have made a being on purpose, both in disposition and humour, to delight in the situation he is in, and make himself agreeable to others, I should have supposed monsieur de Sévigné would have been he; but the very reverse is the case. Well, it is not the first time I have been mistaken. Had I not a great stock of courage, I should be almost in despair; for the whole weight of his place falls upon me, especially as he has made away with every thing he possibly could, in this part of the world*; but I am silent, and only desire him, in return for the expense and uneasiness he causes me, to be satisfied with his situation, for his discontent gives me more concern than all. But let me change the subject. I expect him here every day; for if he can but be seen at the head of his company when the king reviews it, he will afterwards fly hither, to see his dear country, with an eagerness not to be imitated: *Dulcis amor patriæ.* This was the disposition which the Romans desired in their citizens.

You have guessed extremely well; Montgobert did not tell me you had quarrelled with her; you gave me a good reason for it; we never boast of being in the wrong. She says a thousand droll things upon the perpetual round of company and amusements at your house. I am sorry that the old coach, which is always wanting

* See Letter of 27 May.

repair, should be restored to its old rights of affection: I rather imagined that the past might have answered for the future, and that these disorderly doings had been reserved for the *other*. Self-love sometimes produces strange effects. The thought that another is preferred to oneself, the fear of not being beloved, and the desire of surpassing, form a medley of passions, which frequently give a terrible blow to poor reason.

I entreat you, my child, to tell me how it happened that the beautiful chaplet * became on a sudden so troublesome to you, and what made you so impatient to send it to Paris before you. What would have become of it there without either you or me? They did well to send it me hither; I shall not be long ungrateful. I return you my thanks for it, as a present worthy a queen, and which I had often wished to have, when you were yourself tired of it.

Your terraces are very different from the extravagant figures in our woods †. If your walks were as near at hand as ours, you would make the same use of them. Livri may convince you of the truth of this, where you profited so well by those charming gardens, which offered all their delights to you, and which you never refused. I am fully aware of the pleasure you have had in chatting with M. de Vins; he knows, as you observe, as much as those who will not tell what they know. His amiable wife has written me a long letter, filled with expressions of friendship from herself and M. de Pomponne. She has been to see your building, with which she is very much pleased. I fancy we must [illegible] to have a stronger support for the chimney in [illegible] room; it is odd enough that du But should [illegible] thought of this, till you gave the hint from [illegible]

* See Letter of 21 June. † See Letter of [illegible]

tance. Poor madame de Vins is overwhelmed with law-suits, and almost distracted that she cannot get to Pomponne. It would be difficult to find in the world a person of more prudence and good sense. She excuses herself from studying philosophy, by the want of leisure; for she is far from wishing to be ignorant.

You make a merit with me, that you do nothing in your closet; and yet, if I am not mistaken, you are a very thinking substance. Let me hope, however, that your thoughts and reflections are not of a gloomy cast: for my part, I endeavour to enlighten my *twilight* as much as possible.

What you say in regard to madame de Mouci* is admirable. Her ruling planet is, to be useful to M. de Lavardin; and the influence of that planet is, that every thing should concur to crown him with riches, as every thing happens fortunately to the elect. I send you a letter from madame de Lavardin: perhaps she may find the company of the young couple more agreeable than she supposed, for things seldom turn out as we imagine.

It was only by way of jest that I told you how timid I was become in consequence of the accident that happened to madame de St. Poyanges *. I am not worse than I used to be, but is not that enough to make me ashamed of myself? I endeavour rather to get the better of this weakness, than encourage it, and am continually reading lectures to myself respecting Providence: sometimes however this timid disposition saves me from misfortunes, into which others fall by their rashness. In short, you will have no occasion to throw my books at my head; for once more I say, I am not worse than I used to be.

I can easily conceive the *Cartesian conversations* you

* See Letter of 12 June.

are engaged in; I think I hear you all arguing. There is a passage in the Enquiry after Truth, which Corbinelli has undertaken to write against: it is this, "God has planted within us an impulse to love him, which we check and turn aside by our own wills." There is something shocking in the idea, that an all-powerful Being can be counteracted in his operations. There is an infinite deal of information in the Dialogues. I read them, as well as a hundred other things. In short, my library is altogether worthy of you; I cannot praise it higher.

Adieu, I embrace all your amiable party, and you in particular, my child, most affectionately and *cordially*: that is a word of my grandmother's.

LETTER DCXLIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, July 7, 1680.

COULANGES is setting out with his wife for Lyons, from whence he is to proceed to Grignan. He has promised to send me an exact and faithful description of your person. He writes to me very pleasantly on the dull, sober, regular life at Bourbon, which he thought would have been his death. He is endeavouring to recover himself at Paris, by late hours, high-seasoned dishes, and drinking hard, which he seeks for with great assiduity: he wonders how he was able to support the precise regularity of the other place: the poor little man is besides very much mortified; he will tell you all when you meet. I send you in the original a passage of a letter I received from his wife: what she writes is very curious. I beg you will not tell her that I send you a copy of her letters; she would write the same to you, but she does not choose the affair should get wind. I should long ago have taken up this admirable ta[illegible]

ment had I been at Paris, and yet they say enough to me about it to show that I have changed sentiments as well as yourself. It is certain, that it was absolutely necessary to throw provisions into that place, which could not otherwise have held out. My friend's* friend† is the machine which conducts all: could she suppose that the world would always remain ignorant of the first volume of her life? and what has she to be angry at, if it was not told in malice? However, you will see the letter. I have one from madame de la Troche, who assures me, that there is a great coolness towards her who is four steps behind ‡; and that the person § who is four steps before her is more jealous of the confidence and friendship shown to *another person*, than of the *transient flame*, which possesses a very moderate share of merit and understanding: that would soon have been triumphed over; but she will die with grief at the influence obtained by wit and conversation. In short, *she* is treated with the greatest incivility.

But what say you to the marriage of the princess of Conti, who seems to be the darling of the fairies? I have seen my neighbour‖, for I shall give her no other title; she received me with great kindness. The first thing she did was to show me your letter: she perfectly comprehends the meaning of a passage in it, where you speak of her heart, as if you had seen the inside of it. She says, she is come hither on purpose to answer you. Her daughter is transported with joy; she is in Germany, very happy at leaving Denmark, and delighted with

* Madame de Coulanges. † Madame de Maintenon.
‡ Madame de Fontanges. § Madame de Montespan.
‖ The princess de Tarente, who was returned to Vitré, the usual place of her residence, and which is only three miles distant from madame de Sévigné's seat of the Rochs.

her husband and his riches. She was a little too hasty in marrying before she had the consent of all her family; her mother pretends to be greatly incensed at her, but I laugh at this. She tells me that a great courtier* was fixed upon to dance with the daughter-in-law†; and that this same courtier acquitted himself so well, was dressed so elegantly, his colours were so well chosen, and he was so much admired and praised, that the father said to him the other day when they met, "I think you want to make my son jealous; I would advise you to take care what you do." This was enough; there was no more dancing. I could tell you a thousand trifles of this kind, were they worth your notice.

My neighbour talks very comically of her niece‡, who has a violent passion for her husband's elder brother, and does not know what is the matter with her; her aunt, however, knows sufficiently. We both laugh heartily at this disorder, which makes the patient suffer so much, without knowing what it is. It is a rude master, that will have its own way. It is a kind of fever, like that little de la Fayette had, when he said, he felt he could not tell how, and went visiting. Hers is a very severe fit, it seems. She has neither joy nor sorrow, but what springs from thence: she cares very little for what passes at home, only as it gives her an opportunity to keep up a correspondence with this brother, and complain to him. I cannot describe to you how pleasantly, and with what an air of confidence, my neighbour told me all this.

There is a talk of war; this displeases me. The prince goes to Lille, he does not go for nothing. It is thought, however, that the instant the king puts himself in mo-

* The duke, afterwards marshal, de Villeroi.

† The dauphiness.

‡ Madame. Elizabeth Charlotte princess palatine of the Rhine.

tion, the king of Spain will renounce the title of duke of Burgundy*, and that every thing will bow before him These are affairs, my dear child, that neither of us has any thing to do with; but we must gossip.

I am not reading the *Enquiry after Truth* at present. Good Heavens! I shall never be able to understand it; but only certain *dialogues* taken from that book, which are very clear and edifying. I am still shocked with that *impulse* which we check and turn aside: but if father Malebranche stands in need of that freedom of will, which he gives to us, as well as to Adam, to justify the ways of God to adults, what will he do for infants? He must go back to the *altitudo*. I had rather make use of that in every exigency, like St. Thomas: *ma basta* (that is enough for me).

Your brothers-in-law are in a good way; every day brings me some new cause of satisfaction on their account. I fancy you will soon have the bishops: the assembly of the clergy is broken up. The bishop of Evreux will be consecrated at Arles, at least so he says himself. The chevalier has written me a very obliging letter. Mademoiselle de Meri says, that I wrote to her very drily; perhaps the dryness is in herself, as the pricking is not in the thorn: I have just been writing her a little note to assure her I am not dry, and that it would have savoured much more of dryness to have taken no notice of her complaints, than to endeavour to remove the impression from her.

We are dying with heat here; I am dreadfully afraid of your thunder-storms; they are more violent than ours; and I cannot help thinking of your little girl, who was scorched with the lightning. The same acci-

* By a convention in the month of September, the king of Spain obliged himself to give up the title of count and duke of Burgundy, having no longer any possessions either in the county or the duchy.

dent has happened at Livri. Now I mention Livri, the people of that place were destroyed last year by caterpillars, and this year they are robbed and murdered by a troop of banditti that infest the forest. Father Payen was robbed the other day, and beaten so cruelly, that his life is despaired of.

If I were to see you again at the Rocks, I fancy the taste, I know you have for solitude, would make you fond of the two charming cells, which I have built in these woods †. The good abbé still continues building, without daring to raise his edifice, for certain solid reasons; but he has all sorts of workmen.

My son has had an attack of fever, which he hopes, like that of the last year, will confine its operations within the limits of four and twenty hours. I am informed, that he is still constantly at the duchess of V****'s‡. You know how such conduct is approved, in that part of the world, and how very ridiculous he makes himself. The truth is, he has no love for the duchess, but assumes the appearance, which must be hurtful to him, merely for something to do.

I embrace de Grignan, and mademoiselle de Grignan, whom I esteem and honour. I send a kiss to the little ones; and, for you, my dear, what shall I say? I have exhausted all my words; my sentiments are above expression; I hope you are sensible of it.

† See Letter 21 June.
‡ See Letter 21 June.

LETTER DCXLV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, July 10, 1680.

I HAD not experienced, since my arrival here, the disappointment and uneasiness which attend the not receiving letters from you when I expect them. I even began to admire how it happened that I never missed a single post; it seemed to me the greatest happiness; I felt it in all its force, and often mentioned it; but I now suffer severely for it. Honest du But, who delights in giving me this satisfaction every post-day, has not written me a single line by the last, not daring, I suppose, to send me a packet without one from you enclosed: so that here I am, without any letters, but those that are of no value to me. Your Lyons post has certainly not brought me any, for I have a clerk in fee at the post-office, who is very vigilant, and poor du But is not less so. I endeavour to comfort myself with every thing that I said to you on a similar occasion. I know how this delay may have happened, and expect to have two of your packets together on Friday next; but Friday is long a coming; from Monday to Friday are five tedious days; I need not tell you, of all persons, how little I am mistress of my fears and apprehensions: here too they have room to exert themselves in their utmost force; for there is nothing to dissipate, nothing to divert my emotion: I cannot send next door, or a few streets off, to know if such or such letters have arrived, this or that friend has heard from you. I am apt to suspect fevers, inflammations, and a numerous train of disorders, that may be the consequences of the intense heat of Provence, at a time when they are least thought of. In short,

my child, it is very difficult to keep the imagination within bounds, and how then is such anxiety to be avoided?

The princess de Tarente was here the whole of Monday afternoon; she had invited me to an after-dinner collation, and I could do no less than invite her in return. This is a foolish custom, but the present length of the days obliges us to submit to it; it will not however last long. She told me a thousand stories of her daughter, and of different parts of the world; but these I shall reserve for another time. I am in no humour for talking to day, I am so vexed at not receiving letters from you. The good abbé assures you of his services; he is very well, and so shall I be, my dear child, the moment I hear from you. Disappointment is my only malady at present, and, believe me, it is no trifling one. I hope that when this comes to hand, you will laugh at me, as I sometimes take the liberty of doing by you. We must mutually forgive each other on this subject, my dear, and learn to bear with patience the crosses, that are inseparable from a love like ours.

LETTER DCXLVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, July 14, 1680.

I HAVE at length received both your letters together; shall I never accustom myself to these little irregularities of the post? and will my imagination always get the better of my reason? The thought of the instant, which is to determine the yes or no of my having letters from you, creates an emotion that I can by no means subdue; my poor frame is quite disordered with it, and afterwards I cannot help laughing at my weakness. It was the Britany mail that lost its way with the packet for

du. But; for all the other letters, that I did not care a straw about, I received. In short, I am ridiculous enough in my fears; but as you and your health are the cause, I consider them as the more excusable. M. de Grignan, who is the very model of that tranquillity of mind you are so fond of, would be an excellent example to follow, if we had been twins, and our animal spirits had flowed with the same source. But I think I have, in some degree, got the better of this impatience; and am persuaded, that I shall make further advances in the road in which you have led me, by assuring me, as you do, that you entertain an affection for me that nothing can alter or impair. If I succeed so far as to put all my resolutions in practice, I shall become perfect in the last period of my life: as to what is past, it is my comfort that you, my dear child, cannot be unacquainted with the too keen sensibility of heart, the too great vivacity of disposition, and the too small share of wisdom, that fall to my lot; but you conceal all my defects beneath such a load of praise, that I am at a loss what to think of myself. I wish these praises were true, and were built on a more solid foundation than the warmth of your affection: however, my dear, we must bear with ourselves, and we may say, in comparison with eternity, as the song does: *vous n'avez plus guères à souffrir* (you have very little more to suffer). I am really amazed to see how life passes away; ever since Monday the days have appeared insupportably tedious to me, on account of this foolish affair of the letter. I looked at my watch, and took pleasure in reflecting how uneasy we are when we want the minute-hand to move quicker; and yet it moves imperceptibly, and brings every thing round.

I have received another note from mademoiselle de Meri; her ill state of health gives me great concern.

She is sensible that she was not altogether in the right; and that is sufficient.

I cannot comprehend that my letters can amuse your husband. For heaven's sake, what can he do with the melancholy reflections, and long passages on the subject of business, that he must every now and then meet with? He must certainly skip over them, to find a passage that may please him. These are what we call *heaths* in this country; he must pass over many of them before he comes to the *meadows*.

You have been diverted with the person who was wounded in the service *; she is so much so, that it is imagined she is an *invalid*. She does not go the journey, but retires to a melancholy solitude at Livri. Speaking of Livri, poor Payen is dead of the wounds he received from the thieves†. We always supposed it to be a jest; for, could any one imagine such a thing to be true of that beautiful, that peaceful forest, where we used to walk so familiarly, and without interruption? This will make us approach it with more awe for the future.

I am informed there has been something between the king and Monsieur ‡; that the dauphiness and madame de Maintenon interfered; but nothing particular has yet transpired§. This information makes me not a little proud in my retreat; and it would be odd enough if I should be the first to acquaint you with it: tell me whe-

* Madame de Fontanges.

† See the preceding letter.

‡ The title given to the king's brother in France.

§ The author of the Memoirs of Maintenon says, that madame de Montespan knew how to excite the jealousy of the dauphiness against madame de Maintenon; that the former complained to the king, who, having discovered the malice of his mistress, was on the point of discarding her. But we cannot discover why Monsieur was concerned in it.

ther you have heard it from any other person? Madame de Coulanges will gladly write you all the news she can get, which, however, will not be much. The prince is to be one of the party in the journey; but the young princess of Conti, who is as malicious as a little aspic to her husband, remains at Chantilli with the duchess*. This will be an excellent school for her; all the honour of this change is due to the good sense of madame de Langeron.

You will soon see your two prelates, and little Coulanges with them, who is going to Rome with cardinal d'Etrées. You have such good society at Grignan, such good cheer, such good music, and such an excellent little library, that, at this fine season of the year, it is far from being a solitude; it is rather an agreeable little republic; but I cannot bear the thought of your north-easterly winds and gloomy sky in winter. You say you are very well, that is, in other words, you are very handsome; for health and beauty always go hand in hand with you. I am at too great a distance from you to venture upon particulars on this subject; but I cannot err in conjuring you to take all imaginable care of a constitution which you know to be so delicate.

Montgobert does not mention your having been upon ill terms; she describes to me the agreeable life you lead, and is very humorous on the subject of the chaplet. My women are delighted with your approbation of their trick; they trembled with fear for a long time; but finding you only laughed at me, "Good, good," said Mary, "we may put tricks upon my lady now without being afraid." Most certainly there never was a more ridiculous trick than theirs. You may believe, after this, that if any one should endeavour to persuade

* Of Orleans, Anne of Bavaria.

me that you are not my daughter, they need not despair of succeeding.

So then, you read St. Paul and St. Augustin; two excellent labourers to establish the absolute will of God. They never scruple to assert, that God disposes of his creatures as the potter does of his clay; some he chooses, some he rejects. They are at no loss to apologise for his justice, since there is no other justice but his will. It is justice itself, it is the rule of right; and, after all, what does he owe to man? Is he in any way dependent on him? Not at all. He, therefore, does them justice, in rejecting them, on account of the stain of original sin, which is communicated to all; and he selects a few, whom he saves by his son Jesus Christ, who himself says, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine: I will lead them forth to the pasture, and not one shall be lost." "I have chosen you," saith he in another place to his apostles, "and you have not chosen me." There are numberless passages of this nature; I meet with them continually, and understand them all; and when I find others that seem to contradict them, I say to myself, This is to be understood figuratively, as when we read that "God was in wrath," that "God repented him," and the like: and I always abide by that first and great truth, which represents God to me, as he is, the sovereign master, the supreme creator and author, of the universe; in a word, as a being infinitely perfect, agreeably to *your father's* * idea. Such are my humble and reverential thoughts, from which, however, I deduce no ridiculous consequences, nor do they deprive me of the hope of being of the number of the elect of God, after the mercies he has bestowed on me, which are so many foundations upon which to ground

* Descartes.

my confidence: but I have a mortal aversion to enter upon this subject with you. Why do you begin then? My pen runs madly away with me.

I send you the pope's letter*, but you must certainly have had it. I wish you may not. You will find him an odd sort of a pope: why he talks more like the sovereign, than the father, of Christians! He does not show the least sign of fear; he does not flatter: he threatens. He is thought to glance some censure at the archbishop of Paris †. Is this the method he takes to reconcile himself to the Jesuits? Ought he not rather to have been all compliance, after condemning sixty-five of their propositions? My head still runs upon pope Sixtus V. I wish you would begin to read the life of that pontiff; I am sure you would be in no hurry to lay it down. I am at present reading the history of Arianism, but I neither like the author ‡ nor his style: but the history itself is admirable; it is indeed that of the whole world: it has a share in every thing, and seems to have springs that move all the powers of the earth. The genius of Arius was astonishing; as it likewise is, to see how his heresy spread itself over the world; almost all the bishops join in the error; St. Athanasius alone stands forth to defend the divinity of Jesus. These great events are truly worthy of admiration. When I wish to feast my understanding and my soul, I retire into my closet; I listen to *our fathers*, and their glorious morality, which makes us so well acquainted with our own hearts. I walk a great deal; I often lock myself up in my little library, than which nothing is more necessary in this country, where it

* Innocent XI.

† Francis de Harlai.

‡ Louis Maimbourg, a famous Jesuit, author of several historical tracts.

rains continually. I know not how we used to manage it formerly; either the leaves were thicker, or the rains not so violent; for at present there is no keeping ourselves dry out of doors; however, I seldom run the risk.

You express yourself infinitely better than M. de la Rochefoucault, and know by experience, that, "We have not sufficient reason, to exert all our strength*." He would have been surprised to find, that his maxim only wanted to be inverted, to give it a greater degree of truth. Langlade is not a step advanced in the road to fortune; he has made his bow in the literal sense, and that is all†. The paragraph in the gazette was very malicious. He is still on very good terms with M. de Marsillac.

You asked me what dissolved the continuity between La Fare and madame de la Sabliere? It was basset: would you have thought it? Yes, his infidelity declared itself under that habit. It was for that courtezan, basset, that he laid aside his religious adoration. The moment was come, when that bright flame was to close, and to be transferred to another object: but who would have supposed that the road to heaven lay in basset? It has been said, with truth, that numberless are the ways that lead to that point. Madame de la Sabliere, at first, imputed his want of attention to several different causes; she carefully examined his frivolous excuses, his false reasons, his pretences, his confused justifications, his strained conversations, his impatience to quit her company, his frequent trips to Saint Germain, his yawnings, his want of knowing what to say; and at length, after having well observed

* M. de la Rochefoucault's is, "We have not sufficient strength to follow the strength of our reason."

† See Letters of 24th of November and 1st of December.

the eclipse of love, and the foreign body that by degrees darkened the lustre of a flame which once shone so bright, she came to a resolution; what it may have cost her I know not, but without coming to a quarrel, without reproaching him, without the least noise, without forbidding him the house, without any explanation, without endeavouring to put him to the blush, she all at once eclipsed herself; and, without giving up her house, to which she still returns occasionally, or making any declaration that she has renounced the world, she finds herself so happily situated at the Incurables, that she passes almost all her time there, rejoicing in her heart at the discovery that her malady is not like those of the unhappy objects on whom she attends. The superiors of the house are charmed with her understanding: she governs them all: her friends, who go to visit her, always find her entertaining. La Fare still plays at basset; and thus was ended this grand affair, which drew the attention of every body! and such is the road which God has been pleased to point out for this lovely woman! she did not stand with her arms folded to *wait* for the *grace of God*. Good heavens! how such reasoning wearies me! Grace, grace is able to open every road, every turning and winding; basset, ugliness, pride, disappointment, misfortunes, exaltations, or depressions, all may become an instrument in the hands of this all-powerful workman, who infallibly accomplishes whatever he takes in hand. As I hope you will not have my letters printed, I shall not make use of the artifice of our *reverend brothers*, to make them go down.

My dear child, this letter has swelled to an enormous length; my pen has run away with me; answer me only by three words. Take care of yourself, take your rest, that I may have the unspeakable joy of see-

ing and embracing you in health. I do not conceive how there can be any change in a good, substantial, and well-founded affection: but as to love, it is a fever too violent to last. Adieu, my ever dear and *most loyal!* I am very fond of that word. I think I have already given you *cordially;* we shall exhaust all our words. I will talk to you another time of your heresy.

LETTER DCXLVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, July 17, 1680.

I LONG more than ever to see you again; all that is trouble now will vanish; you will have all your family together in the month of September. Mademoiselle de Grignan will stagger your resolutions: how much I honour her virtues!

I cannot, without concern, behold the clouds which yet hang over the conduct of Montgobert: how I pity her! Cannot you speak to her? In my opinion, that is the only method of clearing up this kind of perplexities. When you are mistress of yourself, your words have irresistible force; I have both seen and felt the effects of them. Try this remedy then, my love; be in good humour; attack this coldness, laugh at it, and by your smiles melt the ice of a heart frozen with jealousy: remove all the false notions that have taken possession of it; take pleasure in destroying prejudice; exercise your power, restore peace to a poor creature who most certainly is grieved only because she loves you, and do not leave her in the thought that you sacrifice her to another. But this counsel is only to be put in practice at certain times; there are moments when a person is, as it were, hardened in his self-love

and pride; let it be your charitable study to undeceive a poor creature, who, perhaps, is not sensible of her error. We are sometimes so blind that we can discern nothing; it is a strange truth, that blind persons do not see clearly; but you know my meaning.

What you said the other day, as to humour and memory, was perfectly just; they are certainly things which are not sufficiently known. I also intend to convict you of heresy, my child; and, be as angry as you please, I insist, that the death of Jesus Christ is not alone sufficient, without baptism: he requires the water, the spirit, and the blood, and it is on these conditions alone that his death can be of service to us. No part of the old man can enter into heaven, but by regeneration through Jesus Christ. If you ask me my reasons, I shall reply with St. Augustin, that I can give none, any more than I can tell why, having come into the world to save all men, he saves so very few; or why he concealed himself during his life-time, and would not let any one know or follow him. I can give no reason for all these things; but of this I am certain, that since he thought fit they should be so, they must be right and proper, seeing that his will is truth and justice; but I will say no more to you than to my Huguenot*. Let us now talk of Rochecourbières.

I find you made a pretty little merriment there with the M. de Sebville whom I know. The chevalier de la Croustille is worthy to have been born a Breton; you describe him to me after drinking Jusclan wine, as I see some here, after a drinking-match of Grave. I thank him with all my heart for drinking my health; yours was drunk yesterday at the princess de Tarente's, in her park, where there was a great deal of company, and

* See Letter of the 21st of June.

one of those expensive entertainments that make me always shudder for the consequences. I asked her what she meant by ruining herself, and all her neighbours, in fricassees and ragouts, instead of going back to Paris? We both laughed very heartily. She is always saying that she is going to write to you. She mends her pens, and gets every thing in order; for her letters of ceremony are a kind of embroidery, in which there must be no long stitches: we should have enough to do, if we were to make true-lover's knots to all our D's and L's!

I have heard from madame de Coulanges, who is returned to St. Germain. She is still full of amazement at the degree of favour madame de Maintenon maintains. No friend can show more regard and attention to another, than the king does to her: and, as I have said a thousand times, she has opened to him a scene, to which he was before a stranger; I mean the intercourse of a sincere and unreserved friendship and conversation, with which he appears delighted.

My friend * is still in raptures with the dauphiness, who has shown her many distinguishing marks of kindness, and even familiarity: but she is disgusted with the world; these things affect her not; she is going to Lyons; there is a time of life, it seems, when every thing appears dull and insipid. Madame de Fontanges is set out for Chelles; I should certainly pay her a visit if I were at Livri. She had four coaches with six horses each; her own had eight. All her sisters were with her; but there was an air of gloom over the whole that inspired pity; the fair one, pale and wan, changed with loss of blood, and overwhelmed with sorrow, despising 40,000 crowns a year, and a title, which she is in possession of; and wishing for health, and the king's

* Madame de Coulanges.

affections, which she has lost. Your prior of Cabrières has performed a wonderful cure. I do not think the world can produce another instance of a person at once so fortunate and so unfortunate. My friend saw mademoiselle de Brancas take her seat*. The dauphiness is not at all pleased with the intended journey; she says, there is no expecting to be with child, when we are always travelling. There is a report of laying siege to Strasbourg; others again say that there will be no war.

It is certain that your assembly of the clergy is broken up; this I ought to have learned from you. They have written a letter to the pope in a body, in which they tell him, that so far from the bishops complaining of the king, they consider him as the protector of the church. The pope will be very well pleased with this equivocal answer. He mentions the *regale* (revenues of the vacant bishoprics) of the bishops of Pamiers and Alet. Let them take care of the privileges of their dioceses. For my part, I do not think that little prig d'Alet † complains of any thing; but was it the ghost of his holy predecessor and M. de Pamiers ‡ who sign-

* Marie de Brancas, married July 3, 1680, to Louis de Brancas duke de Villars, her cousin. This duke de Villars-Brancas, then very old, was the same whom, in 1677, it was wished madame Scarron should marry. It was a combination of madame de Montespan's to get rid of her. The estate of Maintenon was given her in this view. But it was too late. The king was already in her chains. She wrote so herself to her brother. "You know me: I am not so soon got rid of; and Maintenon will not effect what the old duke has not been able to do."

† Louis Alphonso de Valbelle; he succeeded Nicholas Pavillon, as bishop of Alet, famed for his learning, virtue, and piety, who died December 8, 1677.

‡ Francis-Stephen de Caulet, one of the greatest prelates of his time. He died August 7, 1680.

A short time before his death, he rekindled the war he had raised in the year 1673 on the subject of the extension of the regale. His

ed that flattering letter? We shall see what answer will be returned. I hope I shall be the first from whom you will receive the epistle of his holiness, and that your prelates will not have thought of this attention.

I am informed that Heudicourt is at court, as ugly as a demon, with a crutch to sustain her tottering limbs: she is just recovered from a fit of illness. I am sure there is scarcely a distemper that is not preferable to that intolerable desire she has, of being perpetually in a place which is so unsuitable to her condition. The king went the other day to Versailles with madame de Montespan, madame de Thianges, and the duchess of Nevers, who was so covered with flowers, that madame de Coulanges says, Flora is a fool to her. Good heavens! how dangerous such a jaunt would be to a man, who had any thing of the libertine in his composition!

You have made me appear in a sad light to the mesdemoiselles de Grignan. I admire the generosity of the eldest, in writing to me so soon after knowing such folly: it is certain, my child, that it had not its equal; the first thing that strikes my imagination, hurries it away so far, as to convert it sometimes into a little bedlam; and when I come to myself again, it seems as if I awoke from a dream, and I am as much astonished at myself, as other people are.

M. de Marsillac has been to take leave of madame de la Fayette. They both burst into tears, as if it had been but the first day. There is no insincerity in these two persons. The man turns his thoughts towards heaven, which makes the fair ones exclaim, "This is the true road," as we said the other day. Adieu, my child, adieu, my beauty; for so you are, if you are as well as

chapter and his grand-vicars supported it with spirit after him. There were great disturbances in the country; one of the grand-vicars of Pamiers was beheaded the following year, in consequence of them.

you say. You are desirous to impress my heart with the pleasing hope of seeing you again, with the same appearance, the same health as formerly: no pain, no heat, no weight; is it possible? Are all these complaints at length removed? I shall exclaim, with Coulanges, "Il faut que j'y touche," &c.*

But be careful, I entreat you, and do not trust them to the snow and ice of winter; you know what you have

* This is the entire song, which was composed for madame de Grignan:

Malgré tant de neige
Nous faisons cortège
A la belle Iris,
Qui vient à Paris:
Mon Dieu! qu'elle est belle!
Et qu'elle a d'appas!
Est-ce une mortelle?
Je ne le crois pas.
Voici la querelle
Du bon Saint-Thomas.
Il faut que j'y touche;
Vraiment c'est sa bouche,
Et son teint de lys!
Malgré tant de neige, &c.

Spite of snow that fills the plain,
Let us join the happy train
Who the lovely Iris greets:
Paris, crowd thy spacious streets!
Heavens! how bright her beauties shine!
Truly, she is all divine.
Can, with her, a mortal vie?
St. Thomas doubts, and so do I.
Let me press her to my arms:
Yes, 'tis she, with all her charms;
Coral lips, and snowy skin,
And brighter virtues still within.
Spite of snow, &c.

suffered already by doing so, and that you may ascribe all your illness to this want of precaution.

It is certain, that you cannot hate restraint more than I do. I endeavour to make people assimilate themselves to me if I can; if I cannot, I give the slip to ceremony. I left the lady, who did not choose to make use of her legs, without any scruple, for two or three hours together, and when I returned, I found her laughing and chatting with my maids: she could not have been better pleased. She is a pretty foolish woman, without two ideas in the world. Her departure was infinitely more agreeable to me than her company.

Madame de Coulanges cuts your brother to the quick with her epigrams. She says, he stands in need of an *ingrate* to recover him a little; but that, from his choice, he seems to be in no danger of meeting with one. He has, as you say, the gift of making the best things good for nothing. His stay at Fontainbleau did him no service, but the contrary.

LETTER DCXLVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, July 21, 1680.

I DO not like you should say that your letters are foolish and insipid; these words were never made for you, who have only to think and express yourself, and I defy any thing to be better done; every thing is new, brilliant, noble, and well turned. Take from me the praises you have lavished on me, and carry them to your own account, if you wish to do justice: but if you really have a desire to please, continue to write to me by your *Pythia*, or any other person, and give me the satisfaction of imagining you reclined at your ease upon your

little couch. Fear not indolence, my beauty; that is a sin not easily committed; since, according to a celebrated casuist*, "Indolence is a kind of sorrow, that spiritual things are spiritual, in like manner as if we were to afflict ourselves, that the sacraments are the source of grace." This definition perfectly secures you; therefore, be what we call *improperly* idle; it will be the surest method to procure me the pleasure of beholding you free from all your complaints.

My son played me a trick the other day; he wrote me word, that he had lost 200 louis-d'ors at cards, and told it with such a plausible air that I firmly believed it, and was, as you may suppose, not a little out of humour about it; but the very same post brought another letter to tell me it was all a jest. I can really see no humour in this; for what end can be answered by making another person uncomfortable? I could not, at the same time, forbear thinking, that something of this kind happens, in reality, in a place that is more dear to me. Trust me, a very strong affection might be formed out of the sentiments that I conceal from you.

Coulanges will help you to eat your young partridges; he has promised me to watch you, to take care of you, and to give me a full and true account of your person. The good princess has been to pay me a visit, without the ceremony of a message, to spare me the idle expense of an entertainment. She surprised me on Friday. We walked about a good deal, and at the end of our mall, a little light collation presented itself, which had a good effect. She talked much of the fault her daughter had committed, in not ennobling her escutcheon by a sovereignty; but I laughed at her heartily, and told her, that in Germany such language might do very well, but that at the Rocks she must be obliged to

* See the 9th of the Provincial Letters.

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allow me, that her daughter had acted rightly. She seemed amazed, that any one should pretend to contradict her, and was pleased with the novelty. The king and queen of Denmark visit the count of Oldenbourg at his country-seat: he maintains the whole court with a magnificence beyond any petty sovereign whatever. She showed me some letters of the countess, which are full of expressions of tenderness for her husband, and abound with reason, generosity, religion, and justice. "Well, madam, what would you wish for more, when with all this your daughter is rich and happy?" It might be supposed I was paid for taking the part of this lady so warmly.

I hear madame de Fontanges is still extremely melancholy; her place seems to me to be vacant, and that, like La Ludre, no one need be afraid of her. I think M. de Pomponne happier than M. Colbert-Croissi; but this is a rare instance. The truth is, as you say, that nothing is completely good or happy.

My son is still employed in trying to accommodate that foolish affair of Corbinelli's; and wishes to bring him here the latter end of next month. This is as yet only a flying thought; if it so falls out, we shall have a thousand whimsical stories to send you. Mademoiselle du Plessis has left her convent: what would you have more? The young marchioness de Lavardin is gone upon an excursion in the queen's carriage with madame de Créqui; she is of the queen's household. Her brother * has a command in the king's household troops. M. de Lavardin is with the prince de Conti; and the dowager madame de Lavardin with madame de Mouci, and her other friends, heartily pleased to have got rid of the company of the young couple.

* Anne-Julius duke de Noailles, captain of the first company of the king's body guards.

You say, you wish for me when you have a great deal of music and mirth: you are right, for *it is my mother's humour*; and I, when alone in these woods, about eight or nine o'clock in the evening, cry, "How pleased would my daughter be, to be here!" All this is as natural as it is to think frequently of those we love.

It is said that the king will leave the ladies at Lille, and will go with the prince, God knows whither. If the Dutch were in the league, I should think he would amuse himself again with cannonading their towns; but as matters are, it is hardly probable, that he would break a peace, which cost him all the rest of Flanders, that he was on the point of conquering. One thing you say pleases me extremely, "that it is more polite to admire than to praise." It is a pretty maxim; but, for my part, I am at a loss to separate them, and cannot forbear frequently doing both, when I am speaking of my dear countess.

LETTER DCXLIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, July 24, 1680.

You describe your closet to me as being like a Harlequin's coat.—This medley is not agreeable to your disposition, which makes me wish you in my library; it is ranged in very exact order, and would, I know, suit you admirably, for I never found you change your opinion, in any thing that was right. I see from hence your fine terrace of the Adhemars, and the steeple that you have adorned with a ballustrade, which must have a grand effect. Never was steeple so embellished before. The good abbé seems very well pleased with it; for all his wisdom cannot guard him against the tempta-

tion of ornaments. I often admire his way of thinking on this subject, and draw the proper inferences for a general treatise on insanity.

I have made but one poor visit to our charming Luna. I assure you, when I determine to pay my respects to her after the manner of the ancients, there is no more damp or cold than on your terrace. I conduct myself with great prudence and circumspection, for I am very apprehensive of making myself ill. I heartily wish you the same fear. The princess de Tarente is a kind of physician; she has studied in Germany, where, she assures me, she effected many cures, like those of Moliere's Mock Doctor. She has put an end to her entertainments, and I to mine; we have laughed at the folly, so I am out of that scrape. I showed her your chaplet * the other day; she thinks it a present for a queen, as I do myself, who still thank you for it, and assure you, that I will take great care of it; indeed I do not know but that it is safer in my possession than in yours. The princess has written with her finest pen to you: she has showed me a very beautiful piece of morality she has embroidered † for you. The next time you write, let there be a passage in your letter that I can show her. Madame de Vaudemont's ‡ letters are still as beautiful in style, as the princess's are in character. How humorous is the vision of Brebeuf! it is, as you say, all Brebeuf §: that application is very

* See Letter 21st June.

† See Letter 17th July.

‡ Anne-Elizabeth de Lorraine, wife of Charles-Henry de Lorraine, prince de Vaudemont.

§ William Brebeuf, author of a translation of Lucan's Pharsalia into French verse. Though Voltaire has quoted a good passage from it, and a good verse is now and then to be met with, the work, and particularly the manner of the poet, well deserve the satirical shafts of Boileau. It

striking; it is just and worthy of yourself. There are writers whose style is so different from themselves, that there is no knowing them by it. To read d'Hacqueville's letters, one would suppose him softness and tenderness itself; see him, and all this is so well concealed under the rectitude of his understanding, and the inflexibility of his mind, that he appears quite another man.

Madame de Vins is still the same: she has written me a long and charming letter: she tells me she amuses herself highly with you and M. de Grignan about his jealousy. I fancy you to have taught him the commerce of friendship, as madame de Maintenon has taught another person whom you know (the king). Madame de Vins is going to live at the hotel de Pomponne; but she will not see that family the oftener in consequence. I confess I take great pleasure in the thought of living under the same roof with those we love; for otherwise, we are never sure of fixing upon the best hours for being in their company. I believe you are of the same opinion. The bishop of Rennes has passed by here, like a flash of lightning: he supped with us, and we had a great deal of chat in the evening about madame

has been said of him, that he was *Lucano Lucanior*, that he out-Lucaned Lucan. But if he has spoiled his original, it appears that his original first corrupted him. His taste for it was singularly acquired. When young, he was captivated with, and would read nothing but, Horace; while one of his companions, of the name of Gautier, read and praised nothing but Lucan. It was a continual subject of dispute between the two friends, who, in order to terminate it, agreed that each should read his comrade's favourite author. It happened that, in changing their books, they changed tastes. Gautier could endure nothing but Horace, and Brebeuf was so enamoured with Lucan, and even with his faults, that he exceeded them, according to custom, in imitating them. From this anecdote, many interesting consequences might be derived.

de Lavardin. I have not the art of detaining spirits; so he disappeared again, at three o'clock in the morning.

My son talks to me strangely about the fat cousin: he only wishes for a truly cruel one, to comfort him a little; for he considers an ungrateful one as a mere chimera. This is the style of madame de Coulanges, which he always adopts; and in mentioning some money he won of the cousin, he says, "Would to heaven I had gained nothing more!" What can he mean? He promised to make me his confidant in a thousand things; but really, after this, he ought to [illegible], with the abbé d'Effiat, "I know not whether I make myself understood." All this under the rose, if you please.

I really pity your little one at Aix, to be destined to pass her life in a convent*, entirely lost to you; waiting a vocation, you dare not remove her, for fear of giving her a relish for the world. The poor child is of a melancholy and jealous turn of mind, that is calculated to destroy her. For my part, I would try if Providence had no objection to her being at Aubenas: she would be less likely to be misled than here. Kiss the little boy for me. I often think of him and Paulina, but only as a kind of road that leads me to you, who are the centre of all my thoughts and affections.

I congratulate M. de Grignan on the beauty of his terrace; if he is pleased with it, his ancestors†, the dukes of Genoa, would have been so; his taste is better

* Of the nuns of Sainte-Marie at Aix. Provence, and particularly the city of Aix, the archbishop, and its parliament, were anti-Jansenists, which explains the words *lost* and *misled* in this passage. It was the parliament of Paris which had caused the *Lettres Provinciales* to be burned by the common hangman.

† By his mother's side. Margaret of Ornano, grand-daughter and niece of the marshals of that name.

than that of those times. Madame de Coulanges is gone, as she says, to be your neighbour. She has taken a very affectionate leave of me, and told me several things, but none relating to the court. Little Coulanges will make you very merry.

The letter* of the clergy, no offence to the coadjutor, is greatly disapproved. The archbishop of Paris is thought to be under an interdict, for he no longer officiates. Nothing less than an act of sacrilege in the people can bring that prelate into reputation again.

Adieu, my dearest! I shall no longer be afraid to say that I love you, since you allow me to do so in favour of my style. You pardon my heart for the sake of my understanding; is it not so?

LETTER DCL.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, July, 28, 1680.

It seems then I forgot to tell you, that the person who danced so well, and who was so much praised for his dancing†, was the duke de Villeroi. I intended to have sent you his name by the next post. Indeed, my child, I am very happy that my letters, and the news which I send you at second-hand from my friends, amuse you as they do. It is to the prudence of those who write to you, that I owe the success of my own imprudence: if they would not be quite so wise, they would be able to tell you more than I can do. But, however, my bundle of faggots has pleased you; it was droll enough to see court-news in letters from this part of the

* See Letter 17th July. † See Letter 7th July.

world. They were in the true newspaper style, for they were articles from Copenhagen and Oldembourg; in short, I wrote down all I knew.

It is true, that there is a soul, a tendency of mind, in a certain country, which might follow the steps of mothers and grandmothers, if care were not taken to turn the current another way. The sprightliness, and desire of pleasing, is very great, while the want of beauty is thought nothing of; it is a trifling circumstance which seems to be overlooked, or at least to have no effect. All this furnishes infinite matter of conversation, which fills up the interregnum*.

You have stopt my mouth with the reasons you opposed to mine on the prince's journey. My good correspondence is all at an end. Madame de Coulanges is gone, and little Coulanges with her, and is to call upon you. He tells me, that the very day on which he wrote to me, the abbé Têtu had given a dinner to mesdames Schomberg, de Fontevraud, and de la Fayette, without inviting mmdame de Coulanges, and that I may judge by this circumstance of the disgrace of my friend. *Tanto Codiaro, quanti Diuai* (I hate thee as much as I once loved thee), is my opinion.

Poor La Troche is in great affliction at the death of her good uncle de Varennes, who died lately at Bourbon. She no longer sends me any news; I must therefore write to you at the princess's expense. She invited me to dine with her on Thursday; to-morrow I am to invite her here, which will finish all. I had a fricasee, and a tart, upon my mind, and not being able to vie with her in many respects, I am determined at

* This seems to express, in terms that are purposely mysterious, the situation of the king and madame de Maintenon, which she herself described in these words: "He always goes away in despair, though he is never repulsed."

least to have the satisfaction of owing her nothing in collations. She speaks of you with an affection that pleases me. She will take your compliments in good part, and will be pleased to find that you, as I do, side with her daughter. She attributes her niece's agitation merely to an ignorance of what is the matter with her*. She says it is a violent fever, and that she knows it to be so. You are aware I cannot pretend to contradict her.

I have acquainted mademoiselle de Grignan with the tragical story of father Payen. If instead of attempting to reason with the robber, and endeavouring to convert him, he had only said, "I am only taking a walk, sir, for my amusement," he might perhaps have still been at Notre-Dame des Anges: but he had not invention enough: it comes from the good abbé's, who has revealed it to none but ourselves. Besides, father Payen was booted, and dirty; so that the excuse would not have done so well for him as for us. It is certain that no persons can have been more exposed, or better preserved, than we have been. How many pleasant days have we passed *in questa diletta parte, al' cielo si cara* (in that delightful spot, to heaven so dear)! The greatest violence we ever experienced, was that upon poor Marion. You often prepared your mind for much greater disasters; do you remember it? But you have never been fortunate enough to have your virtue and courage put to the trial. In short, my dear, as the old proverb says, "they are well protected whom God protects." I know not how he has protected your brother in his precious amours; let me know what your opinion is:

* Madame de Tarente believed that Madame was in love with the king. If any thing could confirm this singular suspicion, it would be the violent jealousy this princess, naturally mild and amiable, displayed with regard to madame de Maintenon, in the fragments of her letters which have been published.

he is going to Flanders; I am sure he will return here again as soon as he can.

I am employed in reading my Arianism: it is a strange history, in which nothing displeases me but the author and the style*; but I have a pencil, and am revenged on him, by marking some passages which I think highly diverting from the earnest desire he shows of drawing parallels between the Arians and the Jansenists, and the perplexity he is under to reconcile the conduct of the church in the first ages of Christianity with that of the church at present. Instead of passing slightly over them, he says, that the church for *good reasons* does not act now as it did then. This is very amusing. As for your father Malebranche, I understand but too well his meaning, by that curious *impulse*† of his. I had rather be silent than argue in such a way. We may plainly see, that he does not say what he thinks, nor think what he says. Excuse the play of words; but this is so much my opinion, that I could not help writing it.

It seems, then, that you are no longer accustomed to philosophise, though you are to arguing. I do not pity you, where you are. I only pity myself for being condemned to live at such a distance from you, at a period of life when I have so little time to spare. The good abbé would willingly have a glass or two of the wine which bestows ten years of life: he was greatly pleased with the thought of the wine, and of growing young again. He was the other day covered with nosegays in honour of his birth-day; he remembered the pretty lines you wrote last year on the occasion. They were indeed pretty! He hopes to see you once more in his pleasant abbey, at the mercy of thieves and wolves, and

* See Letter July 7. † Ibid.

all that could have happened to Marion. Though he is now in his seventy-fifth year, he enjoys a good state of health. You say the same of yourself. God grant it may be true! there is nothing I so ardently desire. Adieu, my dearest child; you are the delight of my heart and of all my mental faculties.

LETTER* DCLI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, July 28, 1680.

I WAITED till you were at the cover, my dear cousin, and in reality, you have beaten a great extent of ground. I am delighted that poor little Langhac is well, and that you are at last returned to philosophise and moralise usefully in your own house; for it is impossible to think as you do, without being well armed and well fortified against the cruel and obstinate attacks of ill fortune. In fifty years, it will be all equal, and those who are now the happiest, will have passed, like the rest, into the resistless tide which carries all before it. Reflect seriously on your side, as we do on ours, and continue to love us in spite of the distance which separates us. I, you know, am accustomed to love at the distance of two hundred leagues; judge, therefore, whether you may not depend on me. The Provençale is tolerably well, but the time of her return is still uncertain. Mine, I fancy, will be towards the end of the year. We have the same amusements with us that you have with you. Nothing occupies the mind so agreeably as making alterations in the house and gardens, but your beautiful situation at Chaseu leaves no room for improvement. I shall never forget your sheep and your meadows, nor your conversation and hospitality.

LETTER DCLII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNTESS DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Wednesday, July 31, 1680.

It cannot be denied that we are a little cloudy: the delay of a post, a letter detained, fills us with painful apprehensions. But let us not send our grumblings so far; let us keep them to ourselves on each side; let us spare the post-boys the trouble of conveying backwards and forwards the reasons we know so well how to frame for ourselves, and let us mutually pardon each other the little follies which are inseparable from a friendship more cruelly divided than any other I know. I wonder sometimes why it has pleased Providence to cast us at such a distance from each other. The princess de Tarente is much better reconciled to the exile of her daughter*, and they keep up a pretty good correspondence together. I gave her as handsome an entertainment on Monday as I could. I had recourse to my neighbours for some partridges, which are scarce here; every thing else is plentiful, and good. Our good Marbeuf was one of the party. She has been here only one day, and two at the princess's. She is going back to the Chaulnes family at Rennes, who, by the bye, have sent their compliments of inquiry to know if they should wait on us here. The princess sent back what answer she pleased, in her own language. I said No, on my part, and that I would accompany the princess to pay my respects to them; and that she would gladly volunteer a visit, having no intention to disturb the so-

* See Letter, July 21.

litude of this place with the blaze and bustle that surrounds them. She was charmed at the jesting manner in which I had saved the trouble of receiving these visitors. We both vowed to each other, at table, to yield no more to the expense of giving treats. She brought five or six persons with her. I had some neighbours, who went out with their dogs and guns for me; and now I have shut the temple of Janus. I think that is not badly applied; your *Carthages** put me in mind of it.

Montgobert informs me that you are stronger than you were, and confirms what you say to me about your health. She mentions your feasts and entertainments, and seems to be quite gay. Never was your mansion more brilliant than at present; but I fancy I should be at a loss to find a place to sup in, at this time of the year; there is none that I know of, but Rochecourbière, the terrace, and the meadow. I remember to have lived luxuriously there, particularly with those exquisite ortolans, whose fat I was as fond of, as you were of the orange-flowers at Hieres. We are not incommoded here by the heat; the rain you suppose prevents us from making our hay, which is no small mortification to us.

A young man came to visit me the other day, who is the son of a gentleman of Anjou, with whom I was formerly intimately acquainted. At his entrance I beheld a fine, graceful, handsome figure, which struck me with pleasure; but, alas! as soon as he opened his mouth, he laughed at every word he spoke, which made *me* almost ready to cry. He has a smattering of Paris and the opera; he sings; is familiar and airy; and repeats with great gravity, "Quand on n'a point ce qu'on

* That is, your buildings.

aime, qu'importe, qu' importe à quel prix? (To obtain what we do not love, what price is too great?) instead of *To obtain what we love*, which you know are the words of the opera*. I recommend this charming alteration to M. de Grignan, to set it to music.

I have had the letter of the clergy to the king sent to me; it is a curious piece; it would do you good to see how prettily they threaten his holiness. In my opinion they could not have devised a more certain method to make the pope † change the pacific intentions, which he seems to have adopted in his letter to cardinal d'Etrées, whom he invites to come to Rome and settle every thing by his spirit of moderation. If his holiness sees this letter of the clergy, he may possibly alter his tone. The coadjutor's name immediately struck me among the rest; but, I must say, not with so much pleasure, as when I heard his speech to the king extolled, as perfectly elegant and well delivered.

I feel that my son stands in need of patience; he has found under the canopy ‡ certain species of misfortunes, that are calculated to cure human vanity: perfidy and deceit are of the number; in a word, every thing that can make him wish for *a cruel one*, as madame de Coulanges says. I wish this may not be productive of more than one ill effect. He is gone, and, to complete all, M. de la Trousse had intended to petition that his place might be secured to Bouligneux, to whom he is about to marry his daughter. You will easily judge, that this is entirely overturning your poor brother; for how can he pretend to keep his place under

* The words of the opera are: Quand on obtient ce qu'on aime, qu'importe, qu'importe à quel prix?

† Innocent XI.

‡ A particular allusion used between the mother and daughter, and to be found in the former volumes of these Letters.

such circumstances? and yet how can he resign, when by so doing he will deprive himself of all chance of promotion? We shall see whether La Trousse cannot afford us some less ungenerous chance of extricating ourselves from a labyrinth, into which we have been led by him. I need not tell you how greatly this real cause of being dissatisfied with his situation has increased the desire your brother had to get rid of his place, even before there was any cause.

If Providence delights in order, and order is no other than the will of God, there must be many things contrary to his will. The persecutions against St. Athanasius, and other orthodox divines, and the calm prosperity of tyrants, are all contrary to order, and consequently to the will of God: therefore, with leave of father Malebranche*, would it not be as well to confine ourselves to what St. Augustin says, that God permits all things that come to pass, that he may derive glory from them to himself, by ways unknown to man? St. Augustin acknowledges no rule or order but the will of God, and if we do not follow his doctrine, we shall have the mortification of finding, that, as scarcely any thing in this world is agreeable to order, every thing must pass contrary to his will who made all things; which, in my mind, is a shocking supposition. But now we are talking of order, my dear, let me tell you something that I have done perfectly in order; I have had two admirable Brandebourgs made for the rain†, one at the end of the long walk by the side of the mall, and the other at the end of the *Infinite*‡. There is a little roof to each of

* Father Malebranche says, that "all that is done in nature is done from the nature of order."

† See Letter, June 21.

‡ The name madame de Sévigné had given to one of the long walks in her gardens at the Rocks.

them, on the inside of which I have had clouds painted, and a verse that I met with the other day in the Pastor Fido,

Di nimbi il cielo s'oscura indarno *.

If you do not think this pretty, and prettily applied, I shall be quite vexed. Be so good as to find out another verse for me on the same subject, for the end of the *Infinite*.

Madame de Rarai is dead. She was a good woman, and one to whom I was attached. I condole with the mesdemoiselles de Grignan on the occasion, provided they do the same by me. This will occasion a slight mourning in the family, which will be of great service to me at Rennes. That little journey will not in the least break in upon our correspondence.

Adieu, my ever dear and lovely child! you are pleased with my faggots, and here you have enough of them. He who orders breakfast at seven in the morning, ought to command a good appetite also. Why may I not hope to find you, by your care, in better health than I left you? it seems to me, in this case, as if I could never repay you the obligation I should owe you, and that you might always be as well as you please.

* In vain the sky obscures itself in clouds.

LETTER DCLIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Saturday, August 4, 1680.

You induce me to write long letters, by assuring me, that when I do so, and you find them above your strength, you prudently leave the answering them to a person of a less delicate constitution than yourself. However, as it sometimes happens that I want materials, I conjure you, be they long or short, to recline on your little bed, and chat with me in that situation, that my imagination may be spared the pain of supposing you are inconvenienced by writing. I have an idea that you must love me with greater affection when stretched thus supinely at your ease: this at least is my fancy. I have so great a regard for your repose, that I would willingly persuade those who have the ordering of your diet, to remove the necessity of your rising early, and overheating yourself; for pleasures should not become toils, nor should sportsmen regulate the life of women by their own appetites or inclinations. I like your idea much better, to make every one master of his own time, place, and cheer. If I had as noble a house, and as good society within it, as you have, I would imitate you in that respect. The gormandising planet still reigns in this country in spite of me. I have already complained of it to you. We are so continually at it, and so much in the style of our forefathers, that the expense is intolerable.

The princess de Tarente took me with her the other day to see a very handsome woman of Vitré; it was at her own invitation. I mention this, lest you should take me for an intruder. She has a pretty little country-

seat: the entertainment was the fullest and most elegant I have witnessed for a long time. The greatest rarities and choicest fruits from Rennes in profusion; wood-pigeons, quails, partridges, peaches, pears, as at Rambouillet. The princess and I were astonished, and agreed that nothing is wanted but money, to do every thing. To-morrow we go to Rennes, where such great preparations are made to receive us, that I would not swear our names will not be in the gazette of fashion. Our correspondence, however, will not be in the least interrupted by this little excursion. This, you may imagine, will be no small addition to the pleasure. You are too lavish in your encomiums on my letters. What I say on the subject of our mutual love and esteem, can have nothing in it but simple nature, and I even abridge a great deal of what I would wish to say.

You would have surprised me very much, had you sent back what I wrote you respecting madame de la Sabliere: it would still, perhaps, have been new to me; for I write so quick, that my pen can hardly keep pace with my imagination. But no more of that. I have thought a hundred times of repeating to you many beautiful passages out of your letters: but this would in fact be only paying one another with our own words. M. de Grignan would find his account in it; the frightful passages which you are obliged to conceal from him, in order to preserve me in his esteem, would no longer remain: if he were to see them, he would be apt to cry out with the queen-mother, *Fie! fie upon grace**! I dare not let him know what I have had written over the high altar in my chapel; he would take it for granted, that I rejected the invocation of saints: but, to cut short suspense, these are the words, in letters of gold:

Soli Deo honor et gloria†!

* See Letter, June 12. † To God alone be honour and glory.

a motto which does me no injury with the good princess*.

I am almost tempted to complain to father Malebranche of the mice, who eat every thing that comes in their way here. Is this agreeable to order†? What! good fruits, good sugar, good sweetmeats, all to be destroyed! And last year, too, was it agreeable to order, that the caterpillars should devour the leaves of all the trees in the forest, and all the fruit in the garden? Was it agreeable to order, that poor father Payen, who was returning peaceably to his home, should be knocked on the head by thieves? Yes, reverend father, all this is for the best; God derives glory from it: we do not see how, but it is true; and unless you make the will of God the rule of order and justice, you will find yourself strangely embarrassed. I entreat M. de Grignan to pardon this apostrophe to the good father, who, I am persuaded, jests with his readers when he tells them all these things; and I am the more convinced of it, as there are several places in his book where he says directly the contrary.

* The princess de Tarente was of the Protestant religion, which admits not the worship of saints.

† We know not why she argues so vehemently against Malebranche, who was in reality not so opposite to her opinion as she supposed him to be. What he calls *order*, is what she calls *providence*, which again resembles the *fatality* of which the Jansenists were reproached. The expression of Malebranche was more Cartesian, or, in other words, more philosophical; this is the only difference. The folly of the times was first to attend to these questions, and then to think it necessary and possible to answer them. A great inconvenience arising from this species of folly, is, that the best understandings are the most apt to be led astray. This is evident by the whimsical manner in which the Cartesian philosophy modified itself, in Malebranche, upon the theology of the Molinists. Nothing can prove more strongly how favourable the present indifference of the public to such controversies is to the progress of rational knowledge.

In my last letter I gave you my opinion of the letter of the clergy. I am delighted when we think alike on any subject. The word *phantom*, which they so rudely combat, was at the end of my pen, as well as of yours; as likewise, that they would beat him soundly after he was dead. This is like the count de Grammont's saying, that it was Rochefort who had trod upon the king's dog, when Rochefort was a hundred miles off; for, in fact, those whom our good prelates call Jansenists, have just as much hand in what happens to them from Rome: but their misfortune is, that the pope himself is a little of a heretic. This is a windmill worthy the sword of a Don Quixote. Your comparison of the woman who will have her husband beat her*, is divine. "Yes," say they, "we choose to be beaten, and what has your holiness to do with it?" and they fall upon him themselves; that is to say, they artfully threaten, "that if he attempts to have the *regale* restored to them, he will oblige them to adopt resolutions suitable to the prudence and zeal of the greatest prelates of the church, and, like their predecessors, on similar occasions, show themselves able to defend the rights of their churches." All this is exquisite: had I thought of the comparison, you would have praised me to the skies. I told you how charmed I was to hear the coadjutor's name celebrated on another occasion. His speech was admirable; I was almost as much struck with it here, as you, who were present. But do you not admire the goodness of the clergy, who will not suffer that these two poor prelates *in partibus*, the archbishops of Paris and Rheims, should pay either ordinary or extraordinary tithes? It was the bishop of Alet who made his court by pleading for the

* See Moliere's *Medecin malgré Lui*, (Mock Doctor), Act I. scene 2.

archbishop of Paris. The title of the former is no longer too hot, he has blown upon it. A bishop of Alet, a supple courtier, a parasite, a gamester, a frequenter of operas and all places of gaiety, a stranger to his diocese: all this seemed extraordinary at first *; but so it is, and use reconciles us to every thing.

If you were to read the History of Arianism, it would surprise you; believe me, you would find many things there contrary to order: you would see Arianism triumphant, and trampling upon the servants of God; you would see the divine *impulse*, which determines all men to love one another, very rudely *repulsed*; you would see vice rewarded, and the defenders of the faith of Jesus Christ cruelly persecuted. This is surely the height of *disorder*; and yet here am I, a poor weak woman, who consider it all as the will of God, as tending to his glory, and who adore this dispensation, though beyond the conception of my faculties: but at the same time I am far from believing, that this would have happened†, if God had ordered it otherwise. But let me entreat you, my dear child, not to trust even your echoes with this rhapsody of mine; and as to M. Grignan—not a syllable of the matter. I always make a resolution to be silent on this head, and yet I am always talking of it: it is an action of the spirits, that I cannot stop. Corbinelli, with all his philosophy, has never dared to attack those which impel me to love you above all created beings; for he respects the impulse, and finds it indelible.

* He succeeded a sort of saint, whose life has been written in three unwieldy volumes.

† It was by this distinction the Jansenists prevented the reproach of fatalism. But their adversaries well knew how to rob them of this feeble defence.

The good abbé desires you to believe him unalterable in his affection; he has undertaken to be responsible for your safety in the forest belonging to his charming abbey, where we hope to have you with us next year. Why, my dear child, you are become a perfect adept in the sciences! You understand music, and you know why you are pleased! Believe me, I should be greatly pleased to be at Grignan; it is truly *my mother's humour*, and I am of opinion I should suit my post tolerably well; but God, who knows I ought to begin to make reflections and meditations of another hue, has destined me to the solitude of these woods, as a place more conformable to my situation. Adieu, my dearest, and most amiable child: you desire me to be persuaded that you love me; I am persuaded of it; and, on my part, love you agreeably to that belief, with the addition of the truest affection of nature.

LETTER DCLIV.

TO THE SAME.

Rennes, Tuesday, August 6, 1680.

Yes, it is I who am to blame, it is I who am the heretic; I offend your friends the Jesuits, and you only attack baptism*; there is no comparison in the case. Do you remember *Tartuffe*, and *Scaramouch turned Hermit*, of which one was forbidden, and the other permitted, to be played, without scruple? and do you remember the reply the prince made to the king on the occasion†? *A l'applicazione, signora.* (To the application,

* See Letter July 17.

† "I should be glad to know," said the king to the prince, "why the clergy, who are so violently offended with Moliere's comedy, have

signora.) But I have other things to talk to you about, than quotations from St. Paul; I have to tell you how the princess de Tarente was received yesterday in this city.

In the first place, the duke de Chaulnes sent a party of forty of his guards, with a captain at their head, to the distance of a league, to meet her. Shortly afterwards followed madame de Marbeuf, two presidents, several friends of the princess, and last of all the duke de Chaulnes, the bishop of Rennes, messieurs de Coëtlogon, de Tonquedec, de Beaucé, de Quercado, de Crapado, de Keriquimini, in short, *un drapello eletto* (a chosen band). Suddenly there is a full stop, they bow, they curtsey, they salute, they embrace, they cling together with perspiration, and then separate, without knowing what they say or do. Presently the trumpets sound, the drums beat; they enter the city, in the midst of a crowd of people, who are bursting with desire to halloo forth something. I made a motion to alight at madame de Chaulnes's: this was agreed to, and we found her in company with at least forty women of quality, married and unmarried; not one of them but had a title, being for the most part the *shes* belonging to the *hes* who had come to meet us. I have forgotten to tell you, that there were six coaches and six, and above ten coaches and four. But to return to the ladies. I found three or four of my daughters-in-law among them, with faces as red as fire, so much they dreaded seeing me; and yet, to do them justice, there was not one of them who did not seem to deserve a much better husband than your brother would make. Here we all saluted again, both male and female; in short, there was a strange confusion: the princess

not a word to say against *Scaramouch?*" "The reason is plain," replied the prince; "the comedy of Scaramouch only ridicules God and religion, whereas Moliere's piece ridiculed themselves."

showed me the way, and I followed in exact time. Cheek was now given to cheek in the most perfect union; our faces were complete rivers, when at length we got back to our carriages, and drove to madame de Marbeuf's, who had prepared her house for our reception, in a manner that entitles her to everlasting praise. When we arrived, we flew to our respective rooms; you may guess for what purpose. I shifted myself from head to foot; and I may say, without vanity, that I set myself off to such advantage, that I quite eclipsed my daughters-in-law in beauty; in short, the *grandmotherly* dignity was very well supported. We then returned to madame de Chaulnes's, who came to fetch us with all her court; there we found every thing in the most excellent order, an infinite number of lights, and two long tables elegantly covered with sixteen dishes each, to which every one present sat down: and in this way they pass every evening. After supper, some sat down to play, others chatted; but what gave me great mortification was to see a very pretty woman, who is not a grain wiser than myself, give the duke de Chaulnes two checkmates with such coolness and knowledge of the game, as made me envy her exceedingly. We returned here to sleep, and were lodged most commodiously. In the morning, I rose very early to write to you, though my letter does not go away till to-morrow. I am certain, I shall always have the same things to tell you during our stay here; a superb dinner, a magnificent supper, music, dancing, and all the parade of royalty, from which you will conclude that the government of Britany is a very fine one; and yet I have seen you, in your little Provence, surrounded by as many ladies; and M. de Grignan, attended by as many men of quality, received at Lambesc as honourably as M. de Chaulnes can possibly be received here. I cannot help

reflecting how Providence orders things; you hold a court where you are, and I come here to make mine.

I would not advise you to frame this picture; it seems to me hardly worth it; but every thing I do in this way receives its value from you. I can, however, say of the present picture, that, like those of Reubens, the story has the merit of being true; but if we were to come to framing, my collection would certainly far exceed yours in beauty. I only daub over a description; you paint with all the decorations of reasoning and reflection, and with a pencil that charms me.

M. de la Garde has written to take his leave of me on setting out for Provence, where he will see one whom I long to behold, and with a fervency of desire that sometimes strikes even myself with wonder. La Garde assures me, that the chancellor * has approved M. de Grignan's proceeding with regard to the first president †, and that the court will not fail to do the same. You are now very good friends; and if he should abuse this reconciliation, I would advise you to quarrel with him again, in order to oblige him to do the only thing that can make him agreeable, which is, to leave you: I fancy you might be wrong in a quarrel for a considerable time, before any body would believe it; so well has he established the ill opinion that is entertained of him.

You are doubtless convinced, that my sentiments and yours are the same; but I want to teach you jealousy, at least in theory, and assure you, *credi a me pur che l'ho provato* (believe me, for I have proved it); that we often say things we do not think; and even if we did think them, would that be a sign of not loving? Quite the contrary; for if we were to analyse these speeches, so full of anger and resentment, we should

* Le Tellier.

† M. Marn, first president of the parliament of Aix.

find a great deal of affection and attachment at the bottom. Some hearts are remarkably delicate; when these happen to meet with a cool or indifferent disposition, a very considerable progress is made in the region of jealousy. This I have thought myself obliged in conscience to say to you; make your own reflections upon it, for I cannot pretend to enter into particulars at the distance of two hundred leagues.

Wednesday morning, August 7.

Dining and supping in high splendour with the duke and duchess de Chaulnes, paying a thousand visits of formality and devotion*, running to and fro, complimenting, talking ourselves and others to death, in short, becoming as abstracted as a *lady of honour*†, were the occupations that engaged us yesterday. There is nothing I so ardently wish for as to quit this place, where I am overwhelmed with civilities and honours. I long for fasting and retirement. My stock of wit is not naturally very great; but, in short, I think I spend it all here in small sums, which I scatter about like farthings, upon this person and the other, which will in the end entirely ruin me.

Yesterday we had a ball, where, I think, both the men and women danced minuets and jigs as well as could be wished: this put me in mind of you. I heard a voice behind me say, pretty loud, "I never saw any one dance so well, except the countess de Grignan." Immediately I turned round, and saw a face that was quite unknown to me; but upon asking him where he had seen the countess de Grignan, it proved to be a chevalier de Cissé, brother of madame Martel, who had seen you at Toulon with madame de Sinturion, when M. de

* Meaning, to convents.

† See Letters of 12 January and 6 April.

Martel gave you an entertainment on board his ship, where you danced, and looked as handsome as an angel. I was in raptures to meet with this gentleman; but I wish you could comprehend the emotion I felt upon hearing your name pronounced so unexpectedly: it was like discovering the secret of my heart, at the moment I least expected it. Adieu, my beloved child, I must dine to-day with the bishop of Rennes; nothing but continual feasting. Oh heavens! when shall I enjoy the comforts of hunger and silence? I shall write to you next from the Rocks, where I hope to return to-morrow.

LETTER DCLV.

TO THE SAME.

Rennes, Saturday, August 10, 1680.

Here I am still, exhausting, as I told you in my last, all my little stock of wit in farthings; for there is not a single grain of gold in all that is said amongst us: reason, conversation, and connexion in discourse, are things totally banished from the noisy round, of which I at present make one. I should have followed the princess de Tarente, who left this place yesterday, but that the first president, who is the reverse of yours, and to whom I ought in honour and conscience to have paid a visit at Vannes, is expected here this evening. I shall see him, speak to him, and then be off to-morrow, if I possibly can, but on Monday at latest. I shall feel the truest pleasure in returning to the stillness and retirement of my woods.

But now, my dear child, a word respecting yourself. I am very glad to find you amuse yourself, and I highly approve of your suppers and entertainments: but do

these little irregularities agree with your tender constitution? Montgobert has given me a very pretty description of the supper that she ordered. She has sent me the verses of Apollo, which I find worthy of Frêne. It required no small invention to put your music to so good a purpose, and to have the car and steeds sally forth from the stable, instead of making them descend from heaven. Indeed I think it a great pity that I cannot partake of all these amusements; you do well, however, in letting me have them at second-hand. My little marquis writes to me very prettily upon this head. It is the mesdemoiselles de Grignan who thus enliven your mansion. Your reflection on the fortunes of mademoiselle de Noailles and madame de Saint-Geran, are very good. Judgements from appearances so often prove fallacious, that I wonder people do not lay aside the custom.

We have been informed, that, at the consecration of the coadjutor of Rouen*, there were no less than thirty-six bishops, and six others who were not yet consecrated. There were not more at the council of Nice. The duke and duchess de Chaulnes have desired me to mention them to you. Indeed I cannot say enough of the friendship they have shown me. Adieu, my lovely child; I love you, and I tell you so very naturally; you are the true and only idol of my heart. But I shall chat more agreeably with you at the Rocks, than from hence.

Madame de Beaucé is always extolling mademoiselle de Sévigné; wherever I am, you can never be forgotten. All the Tonquedecs are here. I wish you could see how very small a share of wit and beauty is sufficient to captivate my son; his taste is deplorable! it

* James Nicholas Colbert.

makes me think he can have no affection for us. This is not very modest, you will say; but it is written, so let it pass.

LETTER DCLVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, August 14, 1680.

At length I am in the solitude of my woods, enjoying the silence and abstinence I have so long wished for. Monday I quitted the whirlpool at Rennes, which exceeded every thing of the kind I ever met with; because, being confined within a less compass, its force was the more violent. At my return here, I found your letter, which gave me double uneasiness, both for the poor count and you, for your health is by no means in a state to bear his sufferings. It is, indeed, some consolation to me, to find that you have no share in the game; though, to say the truth, it is far from being an entertaining one to him. While the physicians, with pomp of erudition, declare his disorder *arthritic*, you give it the plain and homely appellation of *the gout*. You relate, very divertingly, the martyrdom you made him suffer by your officious care, and how boldly you applied your Hungary water, which was precisely the thing you should not have done; for it is the worst thing in the world for the nerves, in attacks either of gout or rheumatism, which are twin-brothers; only that the latter bears the arms of the family with an abatement*, as being the younger branch, and does not return like the cruel gout: but as to humour and pain, they are of the same stuff. You were, therefore, the unjust executioner of the just will of God. I heartily

* *Brisure*: a term in heraldry.

wish that this complaint, which, like mine, began so unaccountably, may go off again without any serious consequences; I wish it, for I did not walk the next day on the finest terrace in the world. Rest yourself, then, my dear little nurse, eat, drink, sleep, but do not write. It is on this occasion that Montgobert will be of sovereign utility; when you have written three lines, she will take the pen, tell me every thing, and leave my dear child to her repose.

If, as you say, you cannot be easy on one side without being tortured on the other, I am precisely in the same situation; you will conceive my meaning, without my explaining it: and as to the heart, my scales are very different from yours, they take a great deal of reason and gratitude to make up the weight; which reminds me of a question that is sometimes asked, Which is heaviest, a pound of feathers, or a pound of lead? It is just the same, only the one takes up more room than the other.

Return my thanks to the archbishop of Arles, for the kind and obliging letter he has written me: he is so good as to remember me, by mentioning you. Ah, why cannot I fly to Grignan, to return him my thanks in person, to embrace you by the way, and *possess* you a little, as they say in this country? It is really mortifying to be so corporeal, that we cannot stir a step without dragging this tenement of clay about with us. You will tell me, perhaps, that the imagination travels a great way; that we think, and this is, in reality, the same thing. No, no, my dear; there is a wide difference; I should not think myself happy, unless both my body and mind enjoyed the pleasure of seeing you. Thank heaven, they are both a little more at ease, since my return to fasting and solitude. I never knew what

it was to want a recruit of spirits so much as in this Rennes journey. I was the object of the attention, civilities, and marks of friendship, of the whole family of de Chaulnes, and was left alone to defend myself against a thousand others. I never was so beset in my life, the whole province of Britany was there; and you know there is nothing lost with the Bretons; they always keep up their number, so that the crowd was without example. The last day of my stay, two of *your father's* * nieces came: one was as like madame de St. Geran, as two drops of water are like each other; the other was a pretty *brunette*. I was so prepossessed in their favour, that I thought they danced better than any one else. Their eyes are very expressive. There was another lady niece, who understands his philosophy almost as well as yourself. I also saw two nephews; but the most pleasant of all was a Jesuit, hampered between the menaces of the society, and his natural regard to the memory of his uncle; so that the poor father had always his mouth *full of hot peas*, as M. de la Rouchefoucault † said on a certain occasion; and did not dare to speak a single word distinctly. But I can talk of nothing but Rennes! And cannot you guess the reason? as the song says. Adieu, my dear child; I am far from hating you.

* Descartes.

† See Letter of October 25, 1679.

LETTER DCLVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, August 18, 1680.

You have affected me, my dear child, by your account of mademoiselle de Grignan*. My heart was moved at her resolution and virtue. But can you doubt of my esteeming such an action the less, because I believe it to be the work of God? It is for that very reason I admire it, and I respect mademoiselle de Grignan more than any one. I consider her as a chosen vessel, a creature selected and distinguished, a soul filled with the love of Christ: this separation from the world appears to me so particular a mark of grace, that I view her with respect, and envy her happy situation.

The arrival of M. de Vendôme will make a change in your affairs. For ten years have you been governors†! It is a charming post, and few have enjoyed the pleasures of so long an *interregnum*; they are not felt while they last; privation only makes us sensible of what we lose. I should have been very unhappy, not to have seen you in your kingdom. M. and madame de Chaulnes have given rise to all my ideas respecting the charms of these sovereignties, which, however, please more or less, according to the disposition of the persons. It was by no means unpleasant to have the royal authority joined to the name of Grignan in Provence. I question whether the Provençals will be very fond of the change.

* Louise Catharine Adhemar de Monteil, eldest daughter of M. de Grignan, by Angelique Claire d'Angennes, his first wife.

† The count de Grignan, who was the king's lieutenant-general in Provence, had commanded in chief there ever since the year 1670, in the absence of the duke of Vendôme, who was governor of that province.

It is one comfort to me, in this your eclipse, that you will no longer run the hazard of being ruined by expensive journeys to Aix, and that you will be more at liberty. You have performed your part in a distinguished manner for ten years together, and you are now only what you wished to be. You cannot be at a loss for proper reflections. Do you remember how apprehensive we were, that the bishop of Marseilles wished to govern the young prince? See where he is now*. The coadjutor has that place, to my no small satisfaction; for I am persuaded it cannot fail of being serviceable to your family†.

I stole an hour's conversation with M. de Chaulnes the other day, in the midst of the hurry and bustle at Rennes. He spoke with great encomiums of the agreeableness of your province, and the continual pleasure and amusement to be found there, on account of the vessels and galleys, and the personages who are continually coming and going to and from Italy.

You wish me to believe, my dearest child, that you have no longer any internal fever: God grant it may be true, and that your chest may be altogether as free as you represent it! M. de Grignan has soon recovered his health.

It seems then, that you have forgotten the verses you made for our good abbé's birth-day; and, I assure you, I have quite forgotten mine. Yours ended with a stanza to mademoiselle d'Alerac, whom you made to say,

* The bishop of Marseilles, afterwards bishop of Beauvais, had been lately appointed ambassador extraordinary to the king of Poland for the second time.

† This relates to the place of president of the assembly of the states of Provence, which Toussaint de Forbin, bishop of Marseilles, enjoyed before the coadjutor of Arles.

Cher abbé, je n'ai qu'une fleur;
Et je la veux garder pour faire une autre fête*.

This is like many other of your pleasing sallies of wit. Montgobert writes me word, that she was so beset with music the other day, that she knew not where to place herself. We wish we could see you in one of these perplexities. I shall prove strictly faithful to my word, my dear child, and I can boast, with justice, that since your departure I have known no pleasure. I find Montgobert and you are upon good terms again, since you converse and associate together; nothing is wanting but friendship. What a blind passion it is, that makes Montgobert see Magdelon in you! I heartily pity her; for it surely can neither be from malice nor pleasure, that we suffer ourselves to be devoured by a merciless Fury, who spoils, corrupts, and changes, every thing. Magdelon serves you well. I am glad of it, and that she has recovered her health, which I saw in such a deplorable state.

It is now a week since I left Rennes, and began restoring my mind to its usual calm. I would not let the princess come here; I excused myself on account of our Thursday's devotions, as she has frequently done on hers, in which she makes more pretended fastings and seclusions, than we do real ones. You see, therefore, that I have been quite alone. I have employed my time in thinking on the state in which our good abbé was this time twelve months, on your tender care and anxiety, on the assistance your advice was to me, and that of the English physician, and on the poor cardinal (de Retz), who died of much the same disorder as the abbé was afflicted with. O God! how far the imagina-

* I have but one flower, dear abbé, and that I shall reserve for another birth-day.

you wanders in a short time! and how many things we think of, when we are always thinking! This kind of life I do not dislike, while I cannot have you with me. But enough of this subject.

Yesterday I went to visit the princess; she was extremely pleased with your compliment. She had taken it into her head, that she was passionately fond of you, and now she is so in reality; at least, it is certain that she has a very high esteem for your person and understanding. I believe that the countess d'Oldembourg, living in the very heart of Germany, will be indebted to you, who live in Provence, for her reconciliation with her mother. The word Mother reminds me that I have been expecting my son; for Corbinelli wrote me word, that his law-suit kept him in Paris, and that my son would acquaint me with the particulars; I therefore expected to see him every instant. But what do you think he has done? Why he has flown, God knows how, across the kingdom to Rennes, where he writes me word he shall stay till M. de Chaulnes leaves that part of the country. I fancy he has taken this curious jaunt for the sake of mademoiselle de Tonquedec; if so, he will find himself sadly puzzled; for mademoiselle de C*** is not a person to part with her rights quietly; so that the gentleman is at present between two bundles of hay, and the worst two, I believe, he could have selected. What can I do? In these cases I am always resigned to the will of Fate.

I cannot but admire the coadjutor for the justness of his sentiments in regard to the letter of the clergy†. You lose, on this occasion, all the merit of your prudence; you may be as silent as you please, it will not be remarked. If you have been guilty of any acts of

† See Letters 31st July and 4th August.

imprudence, they have been so little prejudicial to your brothers-in law, that I would not advise you to make any alteration in your conduct.

I am a little vexed that you do not like madrigals; are they not the husbands of epigrams? They are really very pretty things, when they are good in their kind; let me desire you, therefore, to reflect again before you discard them entirely. The good abbé longs to be at Grignan once more, to have the honour of a conference with the archbishop: I would gladly be there also. It is on this cruel separation, that I find my submission fail me. I regret those moments of my life that I spend out of your company; and I hurry over what remains, as if I had much time to squander. Adieu, my beloved child; I love you too well to attempt to tell you how much.

LETTER DCLVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, August 21, 1680.

I BEGIN my letter with the compliments that are due to the whole de Grignan family on the death of the old bishop of Evreux; an event which, without being wished for, has nevertheless happened very opportunely. The chevalier gains a thousand crowns by it, and our young prelate is now in full possession of one of the prettiest benefices in France. The union that reigns in your family does not leave room to doubt that Condé * will be one of your country-seats. M. de la Garde is well acquainted with its advantageous situation; the lands belonging to it are extensive, beautiful, and rich; and provisions are so cheap, that you may live in that

* A summer-palace belonging to the bishops of Evreux.

part of the country for almost nothing. In short, this preferment brings with it all that could be wished.

I readily conceive that you are fearful of looking into the expense you have incurred: it is a machine that must not be touched, lest it fall and crush you with its weight. There is something of enchantment in the magnificence of your castle, and the elegance of your table. The dilapidation must be ruinous, and I cannot conceive what you mean, by saying it is not considerable. It is a kind of black art, like that among courtiers, who, though they have not a penny in their pockets, undertake the most expensive journeys both by land and water, follow every fashion, are at every ball, masquerade, and ring, in every lottery, and still go the same round, though overwhelmed in debts. I forgot to mention gaming, which is another curious article. Their estates dwindle away; but no matter, they still go on. Just so it is with you. Is M. de Vendôme expected *? You go to meet him; you regard no expense: is a magnificent present to be made, or, if offered, to be refused; is a visit to be paid to the prime minister, or a journey made to the sea-coasts; is the ancient sovereignty of the Adhemars to be revived at Grignan, an exquisite band of music to be procured, or a noble picture to be purchased? you undertake and complete all. My dear child, I put these things in the number of my incomprehensibles; but, as I interest myself greatly in whatever relates to you, all this gives me more real uneasiness than even my own affairs. This is the truth: but let us not dwell upon these disagreeable topics in our letters; they find but too much place amidst the silence of the woods, and at the hours of night, when sleep flies from the eye-lids. Your let-

* The duke de Vendôme was expected at that time in Provence, to take upon him the command in chief.

ters have no object but to amuse me: I will follow your example. You turn to your vomit at the end of your last; certainly there never was so filthy a subject treated so amusingly! Nasty creature! How could she take it into her head to bring her heart upon her lips to you, and take a journey of fifty miles on purpose to empty her stomach under your nose? Indeed, my child, I think you have the luck of drawing visits upon you this year, but there was no providing against this; it put me in mind of the visit I had from madame de la Hamélinière, whom I hardly knew, even by sight. You will have one from young Coulanges, in whom you will find visible uneasiness, under the air of gaiety he assumes: however, he has a constitution that will stand any thing. I am very sorry yours is not yet perfectly restored; you cannot say you are cured, when you have still the humour which gave you the disorder in your chest, and which may produce the same effects again. It is now at work in your legs, which are painful, and swell at night. I admire your patience in bearing these complaints without seeking a remedy. I cannot help confessing my weakness, and that the least disorder unhinges me. Had I been in your place, I should have punctually followed the orders of Rouviere: I should have tried a thousand remedies, to find one good one; and my impatience and want of resignation would keep me perpetually upon the watch, in hope of a cure.

The princess de Tarente is charmed with your remembrance of her. She was highly delighted with your account of the excellent use you made of your Hungary water for M. de Grignan's pricking pains, and with your calling that the *gout*, which the physicians had dignified with so fine a name. Indeed, my child, there are passages in your letters which are almost divine.

The princess related a story to me, of a German prince in Denmark, who ran a pin into his side; but it was in a strange manner he met with this pin: for a while the circumstance was forgotten; but in about two months the place began to swell and mortify, upon which the surgeons were sent for, who found it necessary to make incisions. I expected that she was going to tell us that he died; but, in short, if M. de Grignan had been wounded in the same manner, think what Paulina would have said of your jealousy.

My son is still at Rennes, doing wonders at the feet of Sylvia; which is the christian name of the Tonquedecian fair. I never knew a lad so unfortunate in a *fricassée*: the last, as you have seen, was not *in snow*. I have been positively assured, by madame de Lavardin, madame de la Fayette, and madame de Coulanges, that some means must be found this next winter of getting him relieved from his place, which would be an insupportable burthen, if M. de la Trousse, with his coolness, should make known his designs in behalf of Bouligneux*. I must confess that I have reflected, as maliciously as yourself, on the secret pleasure he would take in thus stabbing his poor subaltern † to the heart. We have the misfortune to displease him, without ever having had any share in his friendship; but yours, my dear, will comfort me under every uneasiness, and therefore, I hope, you will keep it for me as carefully, as M. de Grignan keeps his young partridges.

Madame de Vins has written me a long letter, full of sincere expressions of friendship, and chats to me in it as if we were together at Livri, or in your apartment at Paris. She tells me she has heard M. de Grignan blam-

* See Letter of 31st July.

† M. de Sévigné was sub-lieutenant in the dauphin's gendarmes, of which M. de la Trousse was captain-lieutenant.

ed in regard to poor Maillane's affairs, as if he had abandoned him; however, she is by no means for condemning him unheard, any more than I am, who know that whatever faults he may be guilty of, they will be all against himself and his family, and not against his friends.

The pious bishop of Pamiers * is dead, so there is an end of the affair of the *regale*, and another title very dangerous to take up; but as we are accustomed to a *new* bishop of Alet†, we shall be the better able to bear with a *new* bishop of Pamiers, and a *new* bishop of Angers ‡, and then we shall have nothing further to fear from vacancies. These five prelates, who were on the brink of suffering persecution here, are now in the presence of that upright judge, who will treat them with more lenity than was shown them in this world.

I want to talk a little with the mesdemoiselles de Grignan. Upon my word, young ladies, it was very civil of you to blaze out in your pink and green, the moment you heard of the death of our poor cousin§. I behaved much better, for I wore a slight mourning at Rennes, which was very convenient to me in the first place, as I had no new coloured dress with me, and in the next, as it gave me an opportunity of showing to the whole province how kind-hearted was my disposition. But adieu, my dears; I long to embrace you. If you have any friendship for me, let me assure you it is not thrown away. As to my dear count, I embrace him, and condole with him on those frightful pricking pains. This frail machine of ours is liable to numberless inconveniences.

* Francis Stephen de Caulet, died the 7th of August, 1680.

† Nicholas Pavillon died the 8th of December, 1677.

‡ Henry Arnauld, who died, in a very advanced age, June 8, 1692.

§ Madame de Rarei.

LETTER DCLIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, August 27, 1680.

Do not imagine that writing hurts me, nor avenge yourself by writing in return; let the good Pythia continue, and do you take your rest. For my part, I let nothing weary me. I begin by Provence: I chat awhile with my dear child; it is both a comfort and a pleasure to me; the rest falls out as it may. It is a long time since I wrote to my son, and it will be still longer before I write again, for I expect him here this evening. He has been all the time at Rennes; we shall talk all his affairs over, and I will acquaint you how they stand, for you seem to speak of them as if you were interested in them. M. de la Trousse might have relieved us from all these difficulties by a little good-nature; by speaking to us, and holding his tongue to other people. It was not Corbinelli's fault that he did not do for my son what he is about to do for Bouligneux; but poor Corbinelli found nothing but thorns and difficulties in the way; he has not the gift of inspiring sentiments any more than of destroying them; he has never attempted to check the course of the *spirits** that flow towards you. *Non mi toccare* (touch me not): he is too well acquainted with me not to know that this would be labour in vain: besides, he does not disapprove of the *traces* you have made in my brain.

I shall make no reply to the heretical opinions you accuse me of, except that I have a picture of the Virgin Mary over my altar, a crucifix, and the motto I men-

* *Spirits* and *traces* are Cartesian modes of expression.

tioned to you*; I want no more. And as to my belief, it is simply this, that *order* is no other than *the will of God;* that when things happen as they should do, it is his will; that when they happen out of the common course, it is still by his will; when his works are beautiful and perfect, or when they are monstrous and horrible, it is still his will; and both the one and the other are equally agreeable to the order of his providence. M. de la Garde will tell you the rest.

Madame de Vins has written to me, as well as to you, that she has gained her law-suit; and the abbé de Pontcarré tells me positively, that madame de Lesdiguieres has likewise gained hers. This happens very fortunately for them. The duke and duchess de Chaulnes will be fortunate also, if they lose a mother, who never cared for them while living, and who, by her death, will leave them an estate of 20,000 crowns a year. They are going to Paris.

I am certain you will have a visit from your prelates, and that you will form one of those pleasures which they will wish to blend with their fame. You will not be sensible of any thing till your family are all together. No one knows better than myself the unions of absence. The custom of writing and thinking is a great thing; but I must confess, that the longing desire I have of seeing and embracing you, is not to be withstood. It is now very near twelve months since we parted; and it seems only as yesterday†, that a great loss happened to the little marquis. Solitude is a perpetual remembrancer and chronicler of events, and this was a remarkable circumstance to us both. Adieu, my beloved child; write to me, but write at your ease, and by no means neglect a life that is so precious to me.

* See Letter of the 4th August.

† The day on which cardinal de Retz died.

LETTER DCLX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, August 28, 1680.

YES, certainly, my dear child, I am very glad you went to lie down; for, fond as I am of your letters, I am still fonder of your ease and health. My son arrived just after my letters were sent away. He brought with him the bishop of Rennes, a marquis, a friend of M. de Lavardin's, and the abbé Charier, son to our good friend at Lyons. The bishop staid only one day here; he and the marquis are gone to Maine, at the desire of M. and madame de Lavardin; the abbé remains here with your brother. My child, there are some women in the world that deserve to be stoned to death: mark what I say, they deserve to be stoned to death: treachery, deceit, insolence, and impudence, are their common qualifications, and the most abandoned conduct is the least of their faults: they are destitute of sentiment, I will not say of love, for they know not what it is; they have neither friendship, common charity, nor humanity: in short, they are monsters, but monsters that have the use of speech and understanding, and a front of brass, that bids defiance to all reproaches. They take a pride in triumphing over and abusing the weakness of man, and domineer over all states and conditions. Reckon up how many there are in Britany, the clergy, the nobility, and the commons, and you will then have my meaning. Collect the scattered fragments of this curious drawing into a body, and you will have the picture of a certain lady whom I shall not name; and would to God she was alone in the world. But, in short, there are people so ill, that it will be next to a miracle, if we are not obliged to have recourse to the last extremities.

They find comfort in communicating to me misfortunes of this kind; and in truth, it appears to me, that I enter into their feelings, and comprehend them better than any one*.

My son has given me an account of a conversation he had with M. de la Trousse, whom, upon the word of Brancas, he expected to find all sugar and honey; but the horizon was soon overspread with clouds, and the instant my son began to speak, the sky loured, and at every other sentence, the question was asked, why he had accepted the place? This put me in mind of Hermione, when she asks Orestes, after he had killed Pyrrhus by her command, "Who bade thee do it?" which drives Orestes mad. I fancy this would have been the case with your poor brother, had not his better angel watched over him. We shall see where all this will end; it is certain that we have time enough before us, provided the designs of La Trousse in Bouligneux's favour do not get wind. What we have to do, is to find some method of resigning this place into the hands of M. de Louvois, by way of exchange for another, which we may be able to dispose of afterwards. This is all I can inform you of our affairs; I heartily wish yours may turn out so that I may soon have the pleasure of embracing you, which is the constant object of my wishes.

I am informed that the queen is very well at court, and that the complaisance and attention she has shown in the late journey, visiting all the fortifications, and travelling every where without complaining of cold or heat, or any inconvenience, have gained her a thousand

* It is evident that this effusion of maternal indignation refers to the cousin, the duchess, who had treated M. de Sévigné worse than the grisettes. The name of this lady might be discovered without much difficulty, but the discovery would be neither useful nor agreeable.

marks of regard*. I know not whether the rest have behaved so well. The dauphiness said, the other day, admiring Paulina de Polieucte, "Why this is one of the finest female characters in the world, though she has not a grain of love for her husband." How is yours, whom we both love so well? How are his prickings? Cannot he embrace me yet, but with his left hand? I make use of both my arms on the occasion, but very tenderly, for fear of hurting him. Adieu, my ever lovely and beloved child; your letters have afforded us great amusement. We restore your name to its native air; believe me, my child, it is celebrated wherever I am, and that it flies to the extremities of the earth, since it reaches this place.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

On my arrival here, my dear sister, I found a letter from you to me, and at the same time saw one that you had written to my mother, which I thought would have made me die with laughing, notwithstanding the terrors I have been in for these two or three days, but which now begin to be somewhat dispelled; and, I hope, though my disorder has not a fine Greek name, that it may be mentioned in French, without putting any one to the blush. M. de Grignan's prickings, and the manner in which your tender officiousness made him roar out for two nights together, as likewise the pompous title of *arthritic*, which the physicians bestowed on a disorder that has been baptized *the gout*, are, in our opi-

* This reconciliation between Lewis XIV. and the queen, was partly the work of madame de Maintenon. The beautiful Fontanges was dying. The king was free. It was necessary to prevent him from becoming the slave of madame de Montespan. His zealous female friend, his confessor, and especially his age, restored him to the edifying road of conjugal duty.

nion, a picture worthy of being framed: but what think you of that which my mother has sent you of certain of your sex, who deserve to be stifled between two feather-beds? I assure you it is drawn from nature, and we hope that in due time it will have its proper frame.

M. d'Evreux's good star has removed the old bishop, his predecessor, out of his way; that of the chevalier seems to beam more favourably every day. I should begin to tremble, if either of these two had been your husband; but M. de Grignan's star prevents this; I fancy it will be able to keep its ground a considerable time; and, notwithstanding the common saying, that the gout is a sign of wealth, as his disorder is only an *arthritic complaint*, I shall make myself perfectly easy.

I heartily thank you for the tender interest you appear to take in my affairs; they are certainly in a dangerous way, but I trust to Providence. Adieu, my lovely little sister; I embrace you, and M. de Grignan also. I am in tolerable health, at least.

LETTER DCLXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, September 1, 1680.

You are careful of your health, my beauty, and I am perfectly satisfied. I must make my acknowledgement to Montgobert, for the punctuality with which she informs me of all that concerns you; she cannot give me a more convincing proof of her friendship; and indeed she seems thoroughly convinced of the extent of my affection for you. I take great pleasure in her correspondence; it is in some degree become necessary to me, and I am sure it would be no small recommendation

of her to your favour, were you to see with how much ease she writes, and still more, were you to know the real uneasiness she suffered on account of your illness last year. Providence will turn all this to good in your mind.

I think you are not a little obliged to madame de Vaudemont, for her kind and appropriate remembrance; but we stand in need of as great a stock of faith as she is possessed of, to endeavour, like her, to make you receive the benediction: to me it partakes of the nature of sympathetic powder. She has healed her own mind, and you are to receive the benefit of the cure: had she committed sacrilege, you would have felt the ill effects of it. I wish for the good of her soul, and that of your body, that your health may justify the purity of her conscience. In truth, I know of no medicine so puzzling as this: I remember no instance of faith, hope, and charity, making part of the *materia medica*. I should be glad to make use of this recipe; but I assure you, it would not be to cure my hands, for I think that is done already; or if it be not, I am so little incommoded by them, that it is hardly worth mentioning. What a curious comparison, my dear child, of your evils with mine! I have already mentioned to you those of my son; they may have strange consequences; and yet he imagines every thing at an end; he eats and sleeps well, and persuades himself, in my opinion too hastily, that it is all nothing.

M. du Plessis and Launaie's daughter frequently make a party at ombre with him. We are surrounded with workmen; this amuses us, and as long as the present return of summer lasts, we shall do tolerably well. When we wish to amuse ourselves with reading, M. du Plessis makes one as agreeably as at cards; be certain-

ly does not want for understanding, and seems to enjoy what is well written.

We have found a friend who can value the lands madame d'Acigné has offered us, and will extricate us from all our difficulties, in conjunction with another person to be nominated by her. If we succeed, we shall not have lost all our trouble in this journey. This friend is the son of M. Charier, of Lyons, whom we all know. He has an abbey in Lower Britany; and thus things have fallen out by this visit, that we least expected.

Is it possible that M. de Vendôme should fail again this year of going to Provence? In truth, the advantage you will reap by his absence will be more than counterbalanced by the expence you must necessarily be at after you have crossed the Durance; so that I think it would be better that the affair were settled at once. I trust, however, that Providence will turn all this to your good, in a way we cannot foresee at present.

You have answered M. de Coulanges excellently. It is very good of him, to pretend to dive into the future fate of others, when he could never see a step into his own! Brancas is going to Lyons, on a visit to madame de Coulanges. He has taken it into his head, that he has important business at Avignon; he will see you in his way. Brancas is the very image of the idea I have formed of perfect love, and the more so, as he is a stranger to all scruples: for, in short, he has made heaven his confidant. Saturdays are wholly set apart by him for communion on the subject; and every Sunday he receives the benediction, in faith, hope, and charity, for the sake of madame de Coulanges. You will see him at Grignan, wholly taken up with musing upon her. The difficulty is, how to give a proper turn

to such immoderate attachments. You will tell me, perhaps, that the body has no share in these things: ah! I too willingly own it; but nothing is in question but the heart, and his is wholly occupied with its object. You will tell me again, that I am now arraigning many others: I own it; but then they are at least convinced of their wanderings, whereas he is wrapped up in confidence. But let me beg you, my child, not to rally him too much upon this subject; it is of the number of those harsh truths, that we do not love to have discovered even to ourselves. I think we may some day be tempted to say to him, as the count de Grammont said to Langlée, "You think you are speaking to the king;" so we may say to Brancas, when he would blind us, "You think you are speaking to God." Certainly, my child, my brain must be turned; what a medley is here!

I beg my compliments to the heirs of the good old bishop of Evreux. I am told that the new one aspires to the see of Marseilles. Is it possible that he should not be contented with what he has, and that having it in his power to make pleasure and reputation go hand in hand, that is, to be at once a resident, and to taste all the charms of a court, he should prefer being the right rev. courier from Marseilles to Paris, like his predecessor? If the latter bishopric is more profitable, he will find his journeys more expensive; but, however, every one has his peculiar way of thinking. All I know of the matter is, that the clergy have made a great figure this year, and have treated the pope as M. de Rome very cavalierly. This sort of war, however, is better than any other; and the right reverends, who gave one another his own so truly, as you say, are to the full as good as the blue-ribbon tribe who were going to fisticuffs.

You know, I presume, the names of those who fell ill after their journey. Mademoiselle is very much surprised to find herself seized with a tertian fever. La Troche still continues to furnish me with many little anecdotes; her son attends on the dauphin. Had we been at our abbey (at Livri), we might have heard the rejoicings and music from Chelles, at the induction of the abbess. It is said there has been an attempt to poison the *beautiful beauty* *, and that nothing less is talked of than a guard for her person. She is still in a languishing way, but so in love with grandeur and state, that she appears the very reverse of that modest *violet* †, who hides her humble head beneath the grass, as if ashamed of being a mistress, a mother, and a duchess. Never surely was any one cast in her mould.

Adieu, my beloved; I cannot conceive how I find materials to fill my letters, but I scribble any thing to divert my thoughts from dwelling upon the state of your health; thoughts which are for ever returning upon me, and with the repetition of which I should tire your patience: but I trust that God will restore you your pre-

* Madame de Fontanges.

† This *violet* is madame de la Vallière, in allusion to the charming verses of Desmarets, which will be read again with pleasure:

Modeste en ma couleur, modeste en mon séjour,
Franche d'ambition, je me cache sous l'herbe;
Mais si sur votre front je puis me voir un jour,
La plus humble des fleurs sera la plus superbe.

My colour modest, lowly my retreat,
Free from ambition, 'neath the grass I hide;
But should you ever plant me in your breast,
The humblest flow'r will swell the most with pride.

A collection of these madrigals, &c. composed by the greatest wits of the age, was made at the hôtel de Rambouillet, and called the Garland of Julia. This Julia was afterwards madame de Montausier.

cious health, and if I were as good a Christian as madame de Vaudemont, I should offer up my prayers on that head incessantly.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

It shall never be said that I sat by and saw a letter sealed under my very eyes, without sending you some slight remembrance. Good morning then, or good night, my little sister, just as it may happen when this comes to hand. We pass our time here very agreeably; it is owing to the aversion that I have conceived for "gilded canopies and roofs of state," that a rural life has such charms for me, and that I can amuse myself amidst the gloom of our woods. I frequently stop before the tree on which I engraved *ahi memoria!* (ah memory!) I leave you to judge whether my reflections are pleasing.

LETTER DCLXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, Sept. 4, 1680.

You seem to envy me for having seen all the family of your father Descartes at Rennes. It is beyond a doubt, that you are more worthy of that pleasure than myself: however, had they taken me for a person capable of understanding their philosophy, I should certainly have sung to them, *Devoid of taste, or sound, or light;* but as I could not answer them in prose, I did not dare venture to attack them by your poetry, which I repeated to the abbé de Bruc at Nantes, who was charmed, and insisted upon my giving him a copy of it. There was one niece at Rennes, whom we would gladly have persuaded, that she was the moiety of a whole, of which

she only thinks herself the least part. Corbinelli would have been in love with all this, and with the Jesuit likewise *. I tell you all these trifles, as the trifles of our Rocks, and as you sometimes tell me yours; what, indeed, should we have to tell, if it were not for such faggot-making? Here are faggots upon faggots; but your bundles are much better than mine.

I never dreamt that the poor old bishop of Evreux had died of a broken neck; I always thought it had been of extreme old age. We may say of him, as the poet says of the father of Rodriguez,

En arreter le cours
Ce n'etoit que hâter la Parque de trois jours.

(It was only warding off the blow for three days). And yet these three days have saved the chevalier from being lurched: this is the first legacy he ever received, and the only death by which he ever gained any thing. The king makes ill fortune fly away before the lustre of his generosity, wherever he comes; the planets, in presence of this sun, all put on a benign aspect. See! I am turned poet, child; this is a perfect rhapsody. But let us acknowledge, in simple prose, that your brothers are very well provided for, till something better turns up.

We have at length seen the end of the year of our good abbé's disorder, and with feelings of gratitude for your kind care, which I place in great part to my own account. Your little brother, however, is far from being well; it is happy for him that he can be at his ease here: I believe he is convinced, that he has no reason to complain of me; and I must confess, notwithstanding the many little scoldings his extravagances have drawn from me, that I am heartily glad I can be of service to him in his present circumstances. He

* See Letter August 14.

had much better have been *fricaseed in snow**, than tossed up in so high a sauce. I am only afraid that you will not find the affair so very extraordinary as it really is; but take this with you, that the beloved, or the hated person rather, who is the cause of all this, appears no more concerned at it, than if it was a simple cold in the head. I think such conduct deserves to be severely punished; and I am astonished that M. de la Reinie †, who is so excellent a civil magistrate, has made no provision against crimes of this kind.

I hope, my child, you will take the very first opportunity to inform me, when you perceive a change likely to happen in your affairs: I am aware it is not the case now; but you know it may be the work of an instant. I am sure, my dear countess, you are convinced that I wish, as much as you can possibly do, to see and embrace you once more; and, if we cannot fall upon a method of annihilating the distance that separates us, we must even follow the footsteps of our forefathers, and make on each side every possible advance towards a closer contact; I am sure it will be the most agreeable task I can propose to myself. Use your endeavours to reconcile me with M. de Grignan. If he would cover me with confusion, he has nothing more to do than to be in full health. We think and talk of him every day in our mall, and often say how dexterously he would drive the ball to the end of it in two strides and a half. I entreat my dear little marquis not to neglect that game, nor any thing else that may render him agreeable; he cannot be too much so: embrace him for me, and my sweet Paulina also; and do not forget my compliments to the mesdemoiselles de Gri-

* Ninon l'Enclos used to say of M. de Sévigné, that *he was a perfect fricasee of snow.*

† Lieutenant-general of police.

gnan: but with all this I seem to forget you, my beloved child: however, say to yourself on my part whatever is tender and affectionate.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I AM very desirous to say something to you that may tally with the style of this letter; but that is impossible, for several reasons: besides, I am in a very ill humour; the cause my mother has glanced at. I see no one who can do me justice for the vile treatment I have received, unless it be M. de la Reinie. Had I in any way brought it upon myself, I should have laid the blame at my own door; but who would imagine, that a person we have seen sitting in presence of the queen, as one of her companions, could treat a man as she has treated me, and that she should propose such a ridiculous method of cure as she has done? I imagined that my dislike to her person, added to the natural frigidity of my temperament, would have been my safeguard; but unhappily I was too good-natured, and I have taken a most cruel way to give the lie to the disgraceful reports that were spread concerning me. You must acknowledge, my dear sister, that this is a curious way of entertaining you; but what affects me the most, will always be uppermost. I will not embrace you; no, not even kiss your hand; it is not that perhaps I am not very well, but that perhaps I am very ill. This is a very mortifying alternative, and *perhaps* is a comical fellow, as our friend said. I am M. de Grignan's very humble servant.

Oui, mon frere, je suis un méchant, un coupable,
Un malheureux pécheur rempli d'iniquité*.

* Yes, brother, I am a wicked, guilty man, an unhappy sinner of iniquity.—See Act III. Scene vi. of the Tartuffe.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

What can be said to so honest a confession? Indeed I am terribly frightened at that same *perhaps*. Heaven knows what may be the event! My ever dear and ever good child, adieu!

LETTER DCLXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, Sept. 8, 1680.

It is renewing the pangs of separation, to discover to me, as you do, what grounds I have for apprehension. Do you recollect our reflections upon the loss of Charleroi, at the very time that Montal had been for more than a fortnight in possession of the place, which he had relieved? I find that I had just the same causeless apprehensions in regard to your furniture, which was safely arrived; I am glad to have been deceived in this respect, and hope the day will at length come, when we shall be able to talk with more certainty. At present we shoot at such a distance, that it is next to an impossibility to hit the mark. I wait with great impatience for the decision which is to do such credit to your prognostications.

Your brother is looking out for a wife from another quarter. We have been under terrible apprehensions; thank Heaven they proved at length to have been false alarms, and a few anodyne potions will finish the affair. It was a mere trifle; nothing more than the overflowing of the bile, occasioned by the heat of the medicines he had taken at Paris. I assure you it is no small joy to us all to be thus delivered from our fears.

I find then that you have left off bathing, my child.

The relief you have found from it in your colic, without your lungs suffering, is surprising. I am charmed to find that you are returned to your afternoon's nap; indulge it, my child, for it will be a means of strengthening you after the weakness which the warm bath generally occasions.

Montgobert continues to oblige me, by giving me a true and particular account of your health. She seems to be so happy in your recovery, and I consider myself so much indebted to her for it, that I can hardly think this line of Corneille's applicable to her:

Qu' importe de mon cœur, si je fais mon devoir* ?

On the contrary, I think we might turn it thus, "What signify my humours, my oddities, or my jealousy, if my heart does its duty?" I have received two of her letters together; she owed me the account of the success of the bathing: she has told me of the humorous letters you all wrote the other day to M. de Coulanges: she likewise tells me what an infinite crowd of company pours in upon you from all sides; I can hardly think it possible for one roof to contain such a number of persons. I fancy you will yet have an addition in your three brothers-in-law; at least, the chevalier writes in a way that makes me think so. Yours is really a strange kind of retirement; ours begins to lose its name; my son has introduced new life amongst us. The good princess goes on as usual; she makes one at ombre with my son and M. du Plessis; and, that I may come in for my share of amusement, she now and then gives me a turn at reversis. All this is very sociable: however, to keep up the appearance of solitude at least, I have had a shady walk made, almost as long as the

* What signifies my heart, if I do my duty?

great one, which I call my *Hermitage:* it is so beautiful, and so finely planted, that my son ought to kiss the prints of my footsteps, every time I walk in it; but as they amount to near twelve hundred a day, and it would be rather too violent exercise for him in the present heated state of his blood, I shall give him credit for this mark of gratitude till a future day. I have made use of your name, in order to oblige the princess to desist from teasing me with invectives against her poor daughter, who is a thousand miles off; and by dint of telling her how happy she is, and asking her what she can desire more, I have at length brought her to write in affectionate terms, and that from her heart too; for her husband is not only rich and great, but is likewise a man of real merit. I have even persuaded her to pay her a visit next year; in short, my dear, I have done wonders. She desires a thousand and a thousand kind remembrances to you, and is of opinion, that we are perfectly in the right to love each other as we do.

I have said all that is to be said about Brancas's visit to mademoiselle de Coulanges: be under no apprehension that he will make it like the one he paid us at Vitré. Thoughtless as he is, he will take care to do nothing that can injure himself; he is more likely to mistake Lyons for Avignon, and forget that he was to go thither. I have also answered beforehand the article of M. de Pamiers *. Poor Sanguin is dead; he was an honest worthy creature! his family are inconsolable: here is a blue ribbon vacant; if his post † does not go to his son, would to God M. de Grignan could have it; nothing could better suit the noble deportment for which he has ever been remarkable; and it is the best

* See the Letter 21 August.

† That of head master of the king's household, which M. de Sanguin had purchased of marshal Bellefond.

place to support dignity that is possible. You cannot prevent me from revolving all these things in my mind when alone in my Hermitage. One end of it terminates in a large square at the end of the mall, planted with four rows of trees, called the Cloisters; the other opens into the wilderness. It is one of the finest walks I am mistress of, or at least the newest. In this place it is, that I confer the aforesaid noble post upon your lord. I would have you think seriously of the affair, and see if, with all the requisites you are possessed of, you cannot find a way to settle the elder brother, who would so well discharge the honours of the house. I have thrown this thought into my letter, as it will not increase the postage, and as I think it is the only place in which you can retrieve your affairs, and at the same time live like the king himself. I shall not say any thing to you about M. de Vendôme; either he will come, or he will not come. You will let me know how fate determines the affair.

I fancy you did not expect to be remembered by the charming queen of Portugal *; for it was not your remembrance that awakened hers. Corbinelli wrote me word how delighted he was at receiving a letter from you on the occasion of this exalted notice. He tells me, you assure him, that, notwithstanding your mutual silence, *your common father* †, and I had like to have said your *uncommon* mother, form a connexion between you. He is charmed that the queen of Portugal has procured him the honour of your remembrance; he writes us the most entertaining letters: he is very well pleased with my son, because he has entered into his affairs; and he relates the result of them very pleasantly.

* Mary Frances Elizabeth, youngest daughter of Charles Amadeus of Savoy, duke de Nemours, queen of Portugal.

† Descartes.

M. de Montespan is become his patron and protector: he has declared, that the person who shall act contrary to the decisions of the arbitrators, shall forfeit two thousand pistoles, and has offered a hundred thousand francs to push the cause, if it is brought to a hearing. This is a style to which we are altogether strangers, and has much of the air of the Garonne in it. Two of the umpires are military, namely, Montespan and Montluc*; and two of the law, de Harlai, and Sainte-Foi, whose name, to use a witticism of madame de Cornuel's, is like that of the *Blancs Manteaux*†, who were always dressed in black. This has put new life into us all; and Corbinelli is so pleased with it, that it is impossible to read his letters without being ready to die with laughter.

Adieu, my beloved child! the letter in which you will inform me of the determination I so earnestly long for, will give me extreme joy, of a different nature. I leave my pen with your brother, who, doubtless, will begin with these lines:

———Après les fureurs de la guerre,
Chantons, chantons les douceurs de la paix‡.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

In good truth, my lovely little sister, I am as happy as man can be; but my mother begins to be sorry that she will have no opportunity to thank me for the care I took of her five years ago; however, I give her credit for it with all my soul. She is at present full as well as I am, at least so she tells us: for my part, I am very happy

* Only one of these was in the army; Montluc being of the long robe.

† i. e. White-cloaks.

‡ Now the horrors of war are past, let us sing the sweet blessings of peace.

in her company, and this satisfaction will be sufficient of itself to calm the ebullition of my blood.

My lovely little sister, adieu; a fat gentleman from Vitré is just arrived, which obliges me to quit you thus abruptly, in order to receive his tiresome visit with due solemnity.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I SALUTE with all respect, and at the same time with all tenderness, the good archbishop (of Arles): may God long preserve him to you! attend to him as you ought while you have him with you. The mesdemoiselles de Grignan, the beautiful Paulina, and my dear little marquis, must not be forgotten. A thought is just come into my head. the abbé de Lanion shall succeed the bishop of Pamiers; will that please you?

LETTER DCLXIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, Sept. 11, 1680.

I COULD not have supposed that a letter, informing me you intend coming to Paris this winter, and that I should see you there, would draw tears from my eyes; yet such was the effect of the unutterable joy I felt at this assurance, added to the sublime sentiments of that wise and holy child *. No, no, it is not always sorrow that opens the fountains of the eyes; tears flow from many different sensations. You have often laughed at me for being touched with the beauty of certain sentiments, in which I had no concern. It was impossible for me to help being moved; judge then how much I

* Mademoiselle de Grignan, who wished to devote herself to the life of religion.

must be so in hearing so affecting and virtuous a speech as that of mademoiselle de Grignan. What resolution! what courage! I am sure there is great reliance to be placed on what she says: she has long weighed this resolution in her mind: she thinks firmly, as you very justly express yourself, and what she has once determined is irrevocable. Your predictions are very just; I knew not on what you founded your seeming certainty: you are at length determined by the most important, and at the same time the most advantageous circumstance that could happen to your family: it is a decisive stroke; on these occasions, a journey must be undertaken *in ogni modo* (in any way). Let me know every thing that is to follow upon this: acquaint me with all your plans, that I may, as much as possible, accommodate mine to them.

I had not the least idea of the manner of the old bishop's (Evreux) death. It is really a shocking circumstance! Well might you say it would surprise me; I was completely struck: I see the hand of God guiding the determination of the good prelate in a most extraordinary manner; guiding him to be torn in pieces, massacred, in short quartered alive! Observe how many different circumstances concurred to bring about the fate that was allotted him! In the first place, to think of venturing on a journey in a carriage at eighty years of age with new horses hardly broken in; no postilion; and against the remonstrances of his friends: nothing availed; he was doomed to perish; he was destined to break his neck; and it was ordained, that messieurs de Grignan should reap the advantage of his disaster. Good fortune too never comes by halves; what a provision is here for the chevalier!

There is no end to the visits which overwhelm you this year; one would think the parties were acting in concert to devour you: two tables of twelve each, in that gallery! I am the cause of all this, by mentioning to you the entertainments of M. de Chaulnes. Really this is carrying things to excess; perhaps you will tell me, after all, you are at little or no expense at Grignan; and I, alas! shall not fail to believe you. However, I am not to learn what the article of provisions amounts to on these occasions; and then the gaming, how do you come off in that point? I am thinking continually of those little rains that wet one to the skin. My child, there are people who are born to spend money wherever they may be, as others are born to have their necks broken: no place is to them a place of rest, or of retrenchment; they attract company, pleasure, expense, as straws are attracted by amber. There is no helping it; fate must have its course, and hie away, in a coach with four young horses and no postilion! But, Heaven be praised, my child, this will not prove your destruction; and the old proverb may now be verified, that a lucky marriage pays for all. You have not the least reason to apprehend that this affair will fall to the ground, after the steps that have been taken; enjoy yourself therefore in full security: for my part, I must confess it gives me the greatest satisfaction. My father used to say, that he was a good Christian whose mind was at ease; in that respect I am his own daughter. Have you not seen the change that has taken place among the bishops? Freluquet will not reach Marseilles; Bourlemont is the man, who will be neither good nor bad for you. If you ask me where he abides (*demeure*), I must tell you, that last year it was at the

Carmelites before the queen*. Think you that Dom Côme will stir himself in the revenues of the vacant bishopries? and will the abbé Le Jay† be a glorious luminary of the church? La Mousse sends me word in great wrath, that he will govern his diocese *in play*, he has so much ready wit.

It is thought that the dauphiness is with child. Madame de Maintenon is still on the very pinnacle of favour. The king spends only a few minutes with madame de Montespan, and as little time with madame de Fontanges, who is still in a drooping way.

The bishop of Rennes, who called upon me here in his return from Lavardin, told me, that at the induction of madame de Chelles‡, the ornaments of the crown, the jewels about the sun that encloses the Host, the exquisite music, the perfumes, and the great number of bishops that officiated at the ceremony, struck a good country-lady, who happened to be present, with such astonishment that she could not forbear crying aloud, "Surely I am in Paradise!" A person who sat near her, replied, "Pardon me, madam, there are not so many bishops there." Perhaps you will place this little story with that I unluckily told you one evening in your dressing-room: I cannot help it; it is piping hot, and I could not keep it.

Say whatever you think proper to the archbishop of my sentiments, which you may venture to answer for: I wish the same in regard to M. de Grignan and his heavenly daughter, not forgetting the earthly one. I embrace the little chits; for I will have no one forgotten. Montgobert wrote me word the other day, that

* He had stopped short in his sermon.

† Nominated to the bishopric of Cahors.

‡ The sister of madame de Fontanges, lately made abbess of Chelles.

Paulina read Voiture's letters to her, and that she enters into the spirit of them as we do.

LETTER DCLXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, Sept. 2[illegible], 1680.

What infinite obligations does my heart owe you, and how happy have you made it, by permitting me to hope for your presence this winter! I have read over and over again the delightful letter I so fondly and impatiently expected. I said to myself, "Yes, this is the voice of my child, who assures me she will come to Paris soon after All Saints." Oh, how great the joy, to have such comfortable assurance in my possession!

You surprise me at the profound secrecy that our lovely saint * observes of her noble and pious intentions to madame du Janet. It is so natural to talk of what we ardently wish, of what the heart is full of, that it is doing penance beforehand to keep silence on such occasions; but such is her disposition: she speaks on this subject to her holy father alone, as it is he alone who is to determine the duration of a residence which she would be sorry to have protracted. By depriving herself of the pleasure of communicating her intentions, she finds them more strongly confirmed in her breast.

I cannot at this distance discover what is become of the crowd that so lately swarmed in your castle. I left you, I thought, in the midst of a fair: but since I now find you reposing upon your little bed, you must certainly have found means to escape from the throng.

* See Letter 19 August.

Montgobert has not written to me, and you mention your health very slightly; you ought to have informed me whether the medicines you are taking have the desired effect, and whether this thinness upon thinness is likely to reduce you to your former state. It is a sad misfortune that what does you service in one way, should injure you in another; it throws a damp upon the satisfaction we should otherwise feel.

We are at present among a set of persons with whom we make great use of both our reason and reasoning. You know, my child, what a good hearer I am, *thanks to God and you*, as they say in this country: I have lost, by dint of listening to you, the gross ignorance I possessed on many subjects: this is a pleasure I now feel the advantage of. We have had here a party or two at ombre and reversis, and the next day *altra scena* (a change of scene). M. de Montmoron came; you know he has a great deal of wit; father Damaie, who does not live quite a hundred miles from this place; my son, who you know is perfect master of disputation; and Corbinelli's letters, making together four: I listen to them, and they all conspire to divert and amuse me. M. de Montmoron perfectly understands your philosophy, and controverts it stoutly. My son maintains the cause of *your father*; as also does Damaie; and Corbinelli, in his letters, takes the same side: but they are not all more than a match for Montmoron. He insists that we can have no ideas but what are imparted through the medium of the senses. My son contends that we think independently of our senses; for instance, *we think that we think* *: this is in general the subject of

* We are agreeably surprised to see at this era, in the heart of Britany, a gentleman who so ably refuted the system of *innate ideas*, and already exhibiting the theory of Locke. For though the English philoso-

our disputations, which have been carried on with great spirit, and have delighted me extremely. Could you, my child, have made a party in this conversation, by your letter, as Corbinelli has done, you would have strengthened a little our poor Sévigné. And now I mention him, I must acquaint you, that he is still very far from being well, though he thinks himself out of danger, as indeed I do also; but he is tired of doctors as well as you: he has taken more medicines than were necessary: they have acted upon his blood, and heated it to such a degree, that every day some of those horrible eruptions appear which are so very disagreeable both to those who suffer and those who see them: thus the poor fellow is happy to have a little respite, that he may repose himself.

Yesterday I observed, with admiration, how very easy it is to console ourselves for the want of play by a better avocation; and how patient we are while we are squandering our money in farthings, as I said the other day at Rennes. But without imitating you, for I hate a bad copy of a good original, I shall tell you, that my age and experience make me wish not to have always such demands upon me, and that I could now and then put a little wit into my poor head; indeed it is what I am every day endeavouring to do when in my closet, or my wood. You will not perhaps be displeased to

pher was in Paris in 1675, I do not think his opinions were ever promulgated there, or that they were even at that time published. But Hobbes, and particularly Gassendi, had raised objections to the meditations of Descartes, of which the principles had sprung up in able heads.

But what deceives madame de Sévigné here, is the word to *think* ill understood, and applied to many secondary operations of the understanding. Its too general signification disguises its origin. Descartes himself was mistaken by not submitting this word sufficiently to the analysis which he himself invented.

know the person who has engaged us in play of late. It is a tolerably pretty woman from Vitré, who has been here three nights, and during her stay we have hardly had the cards out of our hands, she is so passionately fond of them. How much better does mademoiselle de Grignan spend her time, happy creature! In reading your letter over more carefully, I find she speaks without reserve of her intentions to madame du Janet, and that it is only the conversation she had with M. de Grignan that she conceals from her; but still I cannot help wondering that she should mention the one without the other. It must be no small satisfaction to her to have the conversation of so prudent and good a person. I reverence more than ever the wise dispensations of Providence, when I reflect how it turns the steps you are about to take to my advantage; and I already begin to enjoy, in imagination, the pleasure I am to receive.

I ask a thousand pardons: I have met with a little book of madrigals *, containing the prettiest things in the world. I must endeavour to bring them into favour with you this winter. It is a pleasure to have a bad memory; we are reading Sarasin again, and I am as much delighted with him as at first; this is the case also with *les Petites Lettres*; we find something new in these, and we add others according to our fancy: your brother has an excellent knack at furnishing these amusements. I had a mind to dip again into the Prejudices †. I think them admirable: but what crowns the whole, my dearest child, is, that these things all lead directly to you. Oh, how sweet the consolation, to think that we shall

* By La Sabliere.

† A work of M. Nicole's, entitled, *Prejugés legitimes contre les Calvinistes*, (Well-founded Prejudices against the Calvinists).

meet once more! Alas, a whole year has passed in continual adieus; mortifying occupation! I cannot look upon the past with so much tranquillity as you do. It is to me a source of the bitterest uneasiness, at least it has been so till I read the pleasing assurance of your return; now I forgive it in consideration of the future, which offers itself to my imagination fraught with hopes that make amends for all.

LETTER DCLXVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, Sept. 18, 1680.

The day before yesterday I paid a visit to the princess. I told her you advised her to go to Paris, to which she is very much disposed, and the more so, as she is now enveloped in mourning. Madame's father*, who is her brother-in-law, is dead. A clumsy German blundered out this to Madame, without the least preparation; upon which nothing was to be heard but sobbing, and lamentations; nay they say it went as far as fainting, but that I cannot believe, for she appears to me incapable of such weakness; nothing less than her own death can fix her volatile spirits. By the way, do you know that Langlade had lately his spirits so completely fixed, that his wife was hurried out of the room, and he himself stript and laid out for dead, when chance directed a physician that way. The scene lay in Poitou; this physician would needs see him, like the one you told me of, who raised the dead lady to life: upon examining the supposed corpse, he thought he perceived warmth in it,

* Charles-Lewis, count palatine of the Rhine, one of the electors of the empire, who died Sept. 7, 1680.

and he instantly administered certain medicines, every one present making a jest of him. These medicines, however, operated forcibly by vomit, and madame de la Fayette has received letters, which tell her, Langlade will certainly recover. This is a story very similar to yours. His death would have been a great loss to madame de la Fayette, whose only comfort is in the few friends she has still left*.

I am told M. de Silleri is spoken of as governor to the young duke de Chartres, and madame de la Sabliere as governess to mesdemoiselles de Nantes and de Tours†; but I do not believe a syllable of the matter: it would be rude to say why; but there are sufficient reasons. I know not which of the courtiers' tongues first blabbed it out, but madame de Maintenon is now every where privately called madame de *Maintenant*‡. This pun is not unworthy even the spot you inhabit. This lady de Maintenon, or de *Maintenant*, is every evening with his majesty from eight till ten o'clock. She is conducted thither and back again by M. de Chamarante openly.

It is with great pleasure I perceive the increase of piety in your daughter; her impatience perfectly agrees with mine. Have you not a great veneration for her? is she not a chosen vessel of grace, a predestined angel? We can no longer live and converse with her on the same footing as formerly; the favour of Heaven commands the respect of mortals. Let me know your

* Langlade did not recover. According to Gourville, the mortification of seeing M. de Louvois pass through Poitou without stopping at his house, was the cause of his death. See the note in the Letter of November 24, 1679.

† Natural children of Lewis XIV. by madame de Montespan.

‡ Or the lady of *To-day*.

plans immediately: M. de Vendôme seems to find great difficulty in making known his.

I cannot sufficiently admire your friendship in being so attentive to the disorder of Mademoiselle, and your not being willing to allow those born in 1627 the liberty of being ill. You have been more in pain about this princess than any one of her noble family; and such is her misfortune, that it is I who must thank you for your care, as I do also for your scheme of ridding us of that office which instead of benefiting is a burden to us. When we talk of engaging in another, it is only in case of extremity, and if we should be obliged to speak to M. de Louvois; for, in this country, people think a man can neither live nor breathe out of the service: but the real object of our wishes is to get entirely rid of this tie, which puts us under a disagreeable restraint; so that, if you should hear of any one, who is desirous of having what is in fact no despicable place, and whose age will allow him to wait a few years with patience in the station of a subaltern, it would be the luckiest circumstance imaginable for us. If, my dear child, you should be the person set apart by fate to procure us this satisfaction, you may securely boast of having conferred the highest obligation on your poor brother. When he reflects how M. de la Trousse has abandoned him, he is almost beside himself.

You set us the example of a philosophy truly admirable:

> Ainsi de vos desirs toujours reine absolue,
> Les plus grands changemens vous trouvent resolue*.

* Truly mistress of your own desires, no change, however great, finds you unprepared.

These lines deserve a place in our remembrance, and contain a point to which Providence naturally conducts us. If I am not in this happy frame of mind, it is not for want of frequent meditations, and a strict observance of its ways, by which I am more and more confirmed in the opinion, that Providence governs the world, and makes use of all our different modes of thinking, to bring us at length to answer its eternal decrees.

Father Damaie and myself now and then repeat over our old lessons; we are delighted to have him here. We cannot help smiling too, at seeing the father-prior of Livri at the Rocks; he has taken a journey of twenty leagues on purpose to see us; we hope to keep him with us at least a week. He salutes you most respectfully; he has a high opinion of your wit and understanding, as well as of your goodness of heart, and says he never can forget the friendship you have shown him. I answered him in your name yesterday; for by the time your own answer arrives he will have been returned home more than a fortnight. This gives me a painful idea of our present separation, and I find occasion for all the hope which animates my heart on the prospect of speedily embracing you. And, after all this, can you wonder at my admiring the ways of Providence? Happy are they who know how to submit to its will, when less favourable to their wishes!

I did not think cardinal d'Estrées would have gone to Rome; but, since he is to go, our friend Coulanges is quite in the right to accompany him: however, I do not imagine that this will prevent his taking a trip to Grignan. We highly approve of your preparation for the Flemish benediction*; it is much better than that

* See the Letter of September 1.

of the honest priests of this country, to whom we are always ready to answer, when they chant *Domine, non sum dignus*, as you did once so aptly to the blue-coat Girls, *you are quite right*. I never shall forget the reply, it was certainly the drollest imaginable.

Adieu, my beloved; never forget that I love you with so natural and tender an affection, that I am not more myself, than these sentiments are part of me. This period is not very elegant, but it is strictly true.

LETTER DCLXVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, Sept. 22, 1680.

You are so much of a philosopher, my beloved child, that there is no such thing as giving vent to the transports of the heart with you. You are continually anticipating hopes; and you pass over the joy of possession, to contemplate the hour of separation. Believe me, we ought to manage differently the blessings which Providence has in store for us. After having made you this reproach, it remains with me honestly to confess, that I deserve it as much as you do, and that it is impossible for any one to be more alarmed at the cruel rapidity of time, or to have a stronger foretaste of those sorrows which generally follow in the train of pleasures. In short, my child, this life is a perpetual chequer-work of good and evil, pleasure and pain. When in possession of what we desire, we are only so much the nearer losing it; and when at a distance from it, we live in the expectation of enjoying it again. It is our business, therefore, to take things as God is pleased to send them. For my part, I am resolved to indulge myself

in the delightful hope of seeing you, without any mixture of alloy.

You are very unjust, my love, in the judgement you pass upon yourself: you say, that though people at first think you agreeable, upon a longer acquaintance they cease to love you; it is precisely the reverse; you have a certain air of superiority that makes people afraid of you, and despair of ever being admitted into the number of your friends; but when once they know you, it is impossible not to be attached to you: and if any of your acquaintance seem to shun you, it is only because they love you, and cannot bear the thought of not being so much loved in return as they wish. I have heard many persons extol the charms of your friendship to the skies, and afterwards reflect on their own want of merit, which prevented them from preserving that happiness: thus each blames himself for a degree of coldness; but where there is no real cause of complaint on either side, it seems only to require a little leisurely conversation to be good friends again.

Really, my child, you have improved wonderfully upon what I told you respecting Brancas. What you say of him is as humourous as it is true; it is exactly in this way that he has constantly acted between his friends; he is for having good universally communicated, and is desirous of entering into godly bonds with madame de Coulanges, and obtaining that pretty woman for a friend, as he gave her to cardinal d'Estrées; for he was never easy till he made him her visitor in ordinary. This whim has highly amused me, for I know him well, and it is exactly his character. There was a time indeed that he could not bear the thought of a rival; but at present he is willing to give his fair friend an acquaintance of his own choosing: you must remember his uneasiness on Tréville's account. In

short, I can discover nothing more in this confusion of sentiments, than a great deal of friendship, on a groundwork of inclination, bordered round by passion. If he should chance to be with you, do not tell him all this; you may give him a hint or two, if you choose, accordingly as you find him disposed.

I have a great desire to read Terence: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to see the originals, of which the copies have afforded me so much pleasure. My son will translate to me the satire against foolish amours*; he ought to be able to write one himself, or at least to profit by this; if the situation he is in at present does not correct him, I know not what will. We read books of controversy: one has lately been published† in answer to the Prejudices, to which I wish M. Arnauld had replied; but I fancy that he has been forbidden; and it is thought more advisable to leave this book unanswered, though it may do injury to religion, than to permit the publication of another that may serve to justify the Jansenists from the errors with which they have been reproached: but more of this another time. I have been promised the coadjutor's speech, but I have not yet had it; my son and several others speak highly in its praise. But let us talk a little of your health.

Are you not alarmed at the coldness and numbness of your legs? Is it possible that in the country of warm baths you should suffer your limbs thus to perish, and to have no feeling of them but by attacks of

* She, no doubt, alludes here to the well-known description of the extravagance of lovers, which is to be found in Terence's Eunuch, scene I. beginning in these words:

"In amore hæc omnia insunt vitia, &c.

† Written by the protestant minister Claude, entitled, "A Defence of the Reformation against the 'Well-founded Prejudices' of M. Nicole."

pain? Are there no fomentations, that will recall the vital juices to the parts they have thus deserted? or do you consider this inconvenience a trifle unworthy your regard? The bath, you say, has done you no good; but are you therefore to try no other remedy? Is it possible that the continuance of such a disagreeable and dangerous disorder can reconcile you to it? You tell me to have recourse to an opening medicine; it is only two days ago I took one, and I begin to repent it, for I was much better before. I still take the cherry-water, and would to God I could establish an intercourse of health between us; I could spare you a considerable portion of mine without inconvenience. Good day, my beloved child, my thoughts are wholly taken up with you, with your love, your health, and the pleasure I shall soon have in embracing you. I am but too happy in this hope, and I am determined not to cloud it by any gloomy thoughts or ungrateful forebodings.

My son wished to write to you, to tell you he will translate what you bid him, and will profit by your advice. He has showed me a little work of La Fontaine's: I know not why I have not sent it to you. It is true, that they who have seen this beautiful *plum-tree* *, can with difficulty persuade themselves that it comes directly from the third heaven; I think they would now have greater difficulty than ever in believing it. It is said

* Allusion to the story of the honest fellow who could not answer to his conscience to worship a crucifix made out of the wood of a plum-tree he had formerly walked over. This plum-tree is madame de Fontanges. The little work in question is to be found in La Fontaine's miscellaneous poems, addressed to this beauty. It begins with this verse:

Charmant objet, digne présent des cieux, &c.
Charming object, a present worthy of the skies.

It is very mediocre both in style and ideas.

the visits are now daily paid for the love of God; this is a great change. The poor fellow wished to have a little chat with you, but he is so sadly out of spirits to-day, that he can scarcely speak a word.

LETTER DCLXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 1680.

You think of nothing, my dear child, but of quieting my apprehensions on the subject of your health, and I am apt to believe you conceal the truth even from Montgobert. Though I cannot but consider this as an instance of your regard for me, yet it occasions me a good deal of uneasiness; and nothing adds more to my extreme impatience to see you, than the desire of being no longer in the dark on a subject so interesting to me. Put yourself for a moment in my place, and you will be convinced that these sentiments are extremely natural.

I am told the chevalier is in a manner well, and therefore I imagine his journey will not be retarded. But, now we are talking of journeys, let us say a word or two about yours: endeavour to set out, if possible, before the bad weather sets in; and, above all things, take care to lay in a stock of health and strength to carry you through it; but indeed I think your journeys have never done you any harm. The princess de Tarente, who, by the bye, sends her compliments to you, assures me, she is never so well as when she is making the tour of the world; she has been twice in Denmark, which I think may be called travelling to some purpose.

I have a few questions to ask you. Has mademoiselle

de Grignan any inclination to see Paris again, or does she immediately enter into her destined retreat? Is it St. Stephen's or the Carmelites * she has chosen? Does her zeal flag, or does it continue as warm as ever? Do you intend to bring your son with you? These questions I ask you at leisure, and I hope you will answer them in the same way. Pray inform me by the Pythian priestess of the little republic that is to assemble at Grignan. We have had a most delightful season here, have read a great deal, and, as I observed before, I feel the pleasure of want of memory; for Corneille, Boileau, Sarasin, and Voiture, have all the air of novelty to me. We now and then dip a little also into Plutarch's Morals, which we think admirable; and we have besides the Prejudices, and the answers to them; not to mention the Alcoran: in short, I know not what country we do not beat; the little time that remains will soon be gone. God grant you health! this is all I wish, and all that interests me. My son sends you a thousand affectionate remembrances; you are both so old and worn out, that it is the business of my life to nurse you.

Pray make all our compliments to the numerous and polite company with which you are surrounded. Madame de Coulanges has written me word that you are coming to Paris, which gives her no small pleasure; her letter is a very pretty one; she expects Brancas. We must be silent after what you have said respecting the bond he wishes to form. Mademoiselle de Scudéri

* The latter of these, in the fauxbourg (or suburb) of St. James, was the place she made choice of; but her health not permitting her to continue there long, she once more entered into the world; she always, however, continued single, and led a life of the most exemplary piety, till 19 February 1735, the day of her death.

has just sent me two little volumes of Conversations; it is impossible they can be otherwise than good, if she is not whelmed in her grand romance.

LETTER DCLXIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, Sept. 29, 1680.

It is not only a republic, but a little world, that you have at present in your house; you have never had such a crowd when I have been with you. Montgobert talks to me of quintille, I am not acquainted with the game; but though we are in a desert compared to you, we have frequently three tables, tric-trac, ombre, and reversis. Madame de Marbeuf is with us at present, who, you know, makes one at any thing, out of pure good-nature and complaisance. The princess enlivens this retreat like another Galatea; she is in mourning for her brother-in-law the elector palatine: indeed there is not a person of any consequence in Europe sick, but she is in danger of losing a relation.

We have some folks at Vitré, of whom you know as little as you do of the *Hermitage* *. I know not how it happens; but I had rather be without them, and have more time for reading and walking. The *Hermitage* is exactly in the place you mention; but it is so straight, and so well planted, that it would surpri[illegible]. However, I think it is high time for me to think of a different subject.

When I reflect that I am to meet you at the end of

* The new walk in the park at the Rocks.

my journey, it appears so great a happiness that I cannot help dreading that some obstacle should interpose. Could any thing have been more vexatious to you than the chevalier's indisposition? I have shared with you in all the uneasiness it must have caused you. He writes me word, however, that he hopes soon to be able to set out, and that both himself and his brother, the bishop of Evreux, owe their cure to the skill of one of the English physicians, whose medicine has indeed worked miracles this year, as the duke de Lesdiguières and many others have experienced. I have written to the chevalier in answer, that I rejoice the more in his recovery, as I deemed the journey necessary for him. I am persuaded that every thing will be properly adjusted, both in regard to this and your other visitors at Grignan, who appear to me like the trick we play with counters, in which we give a king nine guards on every side; take away four guards, still there are nine; add four guards, still there are nine. This is precisely your situation: your house is full, when you have only your own family with you; and when you have three times as many, you find room for them all. God preserve to you, my dear child, this blessing of multiplication, so necessary to immense expenditure and straitened incomes.

I am amazed that you know nothing yet respecting M. de Vendôme, nor a new intendant; both these will come upon you when you least expect them. What I wrote to you concerning the change your brother wishes, was a thought of Madame de la Fayette's, when we were considering how to get clear of M. de Louvois, with whom there is no other way of dealing but by proposing an exchange; this, however, must be reserved for the last extremity. Our first business must be to endeavour to get rid of the place; and upon this subject we must consult our friends.

I hope we shall all meet together at Paris, where we may confer freely upon these subjects. All I have to request of you is, that you will prepare yourself to travel without any inconvenience; this is the principal thing to be thought of.

I cannot tell when this ballet is to be danced: truly it will be a finished performance; you may guess that I shall say it is not equal to that in which my daughter performed, when such and such persons assisted, and she entertained us with such a step on entering the theatre; and then, I shall relate all the circumstances of that entertainment; but, in short, the fondness and partiality of a mother out of the question, you yourself, my child, must confess that it will be far inferior to yours, and that there were four persons about the late Madame, whom whole ages will not be able to parallel, either for beauty, youth, or gracefulness in dancing. What shepherdesses! what Amazons! Every one seems to wish to be excused from this; the duchess de Sully pleads family-affairs; madame de Verneuil her christening, and so on; but the dauphiness has shown herself so determined, that there is nothing left but to obey.

Adieu, my dear child! give yourself no uneasiness about my health; nothing can be better; would to Heaven I had reason to think the same of yours! I feel no inconvenience from the dews; I have a number of little arbours in which I sit and read, or chat, secure from the weather; and the mall is as snug and as warm as a gallery.

LETTER DCLXX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 2, 1680.

I FELT painfully the mortification and derangement which the illness of the chevalier must have occasioned you; I knew, before you did, that his fever was abating, and that the English physician was curing him, as he has cured all who have applied to him: this has been a fortunate year for his reputation. Heaven be praised, my dear, there is at length an end to your uneasiness, in which I have so sincerely participated; for the abbé de Pontcarré writes me word, that the chevalier and the bishop are perfectly well; accordingly the little plans which seemed to have been disconcerted will now go on as usual. I am sorry to hear of M. de Grignan's journey; I suppose he will be returned by the time you receive my letter; nevertheless I cannot help dwelling a little upon the subject. What a bomb was this that fell unexpectedly, and burst in the very midst of the pleasures and tranquillity of your autumn! It is indeed giving up a great deal to quit your house with such charming company, excellent music, and good cheer. I do not think any monk could suffer more from his vow of mortification. These people from Messina, who frighten others more than they injure them, injure you, as you observe, more than they frighten you. What an expense! and how ill-timed too! I feel all these inconveniences for you, but at the same time I foresee with pleasure the time approach when they will be at an end; till then, however, I tremble for your health, which, I fear, must suffer from these continual interruptions. You are too lively to be calm, and sleep tranquilly, with subjects of agitation upon your mind. I

have seen you lost in thoughtfulness and anxiety for things of much less moment. I am persuaded that you will not see M. de Vendôme this season, but that will not delay your departure. You may wait for M. de Grignan at Paris, as you have done before. You have more reason than any one I know, not to expose yourself to the bad weather; for ourselves, my child, we only wait till All-Saints is passed, and we shall then take our flight.

I proposed five or six little questions to you in my last letter but one, respecting mademoiselle de Grignan, to which you will favour me with an answer. That pious girl is the object of my admiration. You say she has no director but herself; believe me, she cannot have a better. Leave her then to herself, and agree with me that, if we may judge by appearances, no conscience was ever better regulated. These calls from heaven are an especial mark of divine favour; I admire her dignified virtue.

Madame de la Fayette writes me word that every one is ill with a fever; she says it is like a volley of shot fired into a crowded trench, but with this difference, that the wounds are not mortal.

I have informed the princess de Tarente of what Providence and you had undertaken for her daughter; I believe, that finding both against her will be the means of confirming her in the good disposition she seems of late to have cherished. She says a thousand handsome things of you. She asked me, why you were so much interested in wishing her to love her daughter. I told her, that you could not bear that there should be any child in the world so unhappy as to be deprived of the affection of such a mother. This seemed to have no bad effect.

You doubtless know that madame de Ludre, weary of pouting without any one caring for it, has at length

obtained leave of her pride to accept the king's pension of 2000 crowns, and 25,000 francs, to pay her poor creditors, who were very willing to pocket the affront of being paid their own, without standing upon the manner in which it was done. They say she is still as handsome as ever.

Indeed, indeed, my child, I could find in my heart to scold you for making so light of your deplorable thinness. If this proceeds from resignation, it is truly meritorious; but if from inclination, you are certainly to blame: I could wish to see you plump and strong; and in short, that it would please God to restore you to health, with all its circumstances and appendages.

It is not natural that I should not acquaint you with an accident that has just happened. You know my horses, which are esteemed a very fine set: the one that was called Favourite, was in the trave for the purpose of being trimmed, and while they were clipping the hair from his ears, no offence to you, he became perfectly furious; they attempted to loose him, but he flung himself with great violence through the bars, and literally dashed himself to pieces. When I saw him lying dead, I said, like M. de M****, "See what we must all come to!" This is my story. I have borne my misfortune like a heroine, and it shall not detain me from Paris for an instant.

LETTER DCLXXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 6, 1680.

I HAVE kept pace with you, my dear child, in all your uneasiness; distance is cruel on these occasions: we torment ourselves at the very time we should rejoice; but, Heaven be praised! we have hitherto had no cause

to repent of having rejoiced when we should have mourned. The indisposition of your brothers was nothing more than common, and was attended with no danger. They observed the Englishman's prescriptions, as if you had yourself been present to nurse them, as you nursed our dear abbé; and, like him, they found the benefit of compliance. They are now perfectly well, and write me word that they think of setting out immediately. The knowledge of this only was wanting to set your mind at rest; but when we are at a distance, we give way to every phantom of the imagination. The post does not come in every day, and when it does, it occasions such agitation, such emotion! I know too well the nature of these pangs. A constitution so delicate as yours, and liable to such frequent and painful attacks of colic, together with that thin habit of body, which is so little calculated to resist a fever like that you had last year, cannot fail to give me many melancholy hours. I endeavour, indeed, to guard against them as much as possible, but they often prove too strong for me, and know perfectly well how to choose the moment for making their attacks. Your reflections on the eternal disappointment of our projects, are just and reasonable. This is one of my most common meditations, and so much so, that I comfort myself for the little interruptions that attend the hope of seeing you soon at Paris, by the apprehension I should be under, that some unforeseen accident would happen, were my joy to be pure and c[illegible]dless: I therefore suffer it to be a little obscured, as you said the other day, that through tribulation I may behold its approach with greater confidence. How has your autumn, which promised to pass so agreeably, been darkened by an unlooked-for storm in the midst of its sunshine! But I am in hopes these clouds will all blow over, that the sky will again become serene, and your

joys suffer only a little delay. You will soon have M. de Grignan from Marseilles, and your brothers from Paris. I am quite ignorant of the coadjutor's affair; I fancy it will cost him some money, and this may perhaps be worse than the fever; for there is no English remedy against the necessity of paying money, as there is against a fever.

I cannot, indeed, help wondering at your having passed two hours in company with a jesuit without disputing; you must have an excellent stock of patience to listen to all his trite and false maxims. I assure you, that, notwithstanding you have so often artfully waved this subject, I have always believed you to be of the same opinion with myself; and I have sometimes been a little mortified, that you would not permit me to talk to you, upon a subject that I am fond of, knowing that at the bottom your opinions are perfectly right and orthodox. I should never have had so much patience with these reverend fathers. I met with one at Vichi, and we quarrelled at the first visit, which so troubled the waters to him, that he was obliged to go to Saint Mion to cool himself. As you read St. Paul's Epistles, you are at the fountain-head; and, therefore, I will say no more to you on the subject; but talk a little of your poor brother.

A rascally surgeon at Paris, after having made him swallow medicine after medicine, assured him that he was cured, and had nothing more to do, than to follow a milk-diet for a short time, to cool and purify his blood. Your brother followed his advice, but soon found himself in a state that made him curse both the surgeon and the regimen. He thus not only lost time that was precious to him, but was obliged to apply to the other person, who, as I told you, has great skill, and is now managing him in a way that gives us

hope that ere long his health will be restored. Madame de Marbeuf, a very pretty little woman from Vitré, and myself, do all in our power to amuse and divert him; and sometimes a neighbour or two step in to make a party at ombre with him. He is very patient, and what with play and his books, for which he has still a relish, he contrives to pass his time tolerably well. Methinks I hear you say, "But, after all this, my dear mother, can it be doubted what his disorder is?" Oh, no, my child; it is not necessary to be a conjuror to find that out. But, as I said before, he is very patient; and it is droll enough, that the *canopy* saves him from a disgrace that would be insupportable to him if this accident had happened on the rampart; in short, when he reflects, when, and how, and by whom, and under what show of friendship, his youth has been imposed upon, he is thinking continually who knows it, as if that would render the pain less acute, the disorder less troublesome, or the crime less heinous in the sight of God. We may truly say in this case, *l'opinione regina del mondo* (opinion rules the world). In short, my dear, your poor little brother would excite your pity if you could see what he suffers. I believe I shall now have an opportunity of requiting him for the care he took of me when I was ill. God will not permit me to be in his debt.

The prince is very ill, and France may possibly lose this hero. My son sends you a thousand remembrances; he is overjoyed at the thought of our seeing you this winter; and we both flatter ourselves that this journey will prove more agreeable and less fatiguing than the last. If you were as good as you ought to be, you would give me the pleasure of knowing that you would go to Lyons in a litter; and that, as far as Montélimart at least, you would keep the high road, without attempting those dreadful precipices where, to save half a mile,

madame de Coulanges ran the hazard of being dashed to pieces twenty times: by this means you would save my imagination many terrors with which the frightful banks of the Rhone impress it.

The abbé de Pontcarré writes me word that the son of M. de Morant, counsellor of state, is nominated intendant of Provence. He is very much of the gentleman, and I believe you will like him. M. de Morant is nephew to madame de Leuville, a friend of M. de Grignan. I think you are very happy in being with the archbishop of Arles, and in having opportunities of profiting by his conversation. You make many very serious reflections, and so sometimes do I: indeed, how can we fail of making reflections on what passes daily before our eyes?—Pray, assure the worthy patriarch of my affectionate esteem.

LETTER DCLXXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 9, 1680

How I pity you for giving way to such cruel anxieties as you do! believe me, you have not strength enough to support them: you put your blood into a ferment, and you wear out your spirits and your eyes, by always viewing the dark side of the picture. Alas! my dear child, the very day after you wrote your last letter, you must have found that your brothers were perfectly recovered; in short, no one was in danger but yourself, through your too great sensibility of heart, and vivacity of imagination: I foresaw and felt all your sufferings. The chevalier must be set out by this time, and you must have found relief from your fears. I cannot but admire the curious precaution of those who

would not tell you the real state of the disorder, but left you to be made acquainted with it by a letter that was not addressed to you, and which certainly made more of the affair than it deserved. I hope, my child, that what I have written respecting your little brother's illness, will not give you fresh uneasiness: he has indeed a great deal more to suffer; but as he has great patience, is resolved to be completely cured, and as there is no danger, you will not, I trust, alarm yourself upon his account or mine: his disorder does not increase, and we chat and read continually. He is so happy in being here, that I could not prevail on him to listen to a proposal I made to him, of setting out immediately for Paris in a litter, on account of the pains in his head, while I would follow him in my carriage. He has the fullest confidence in the person who has the care of him here; he has staid within during a week or ten days of bad weather, that he may come out at length as pure as if he had been washed seven times in the river Jordan. In short, I will inform you of the end of this curious adventure. M. de la Rochefoucault, who wrote so many extraordinary things, would certainly never have let this have escaped him. What think you of my son, while he was at Paris, telling the whole history of his misfortunes to madame de la Fayette, and a dozen more of his female acquaintance? Was not this a fine way of keeping a secret, to intrust it to so many persons? For my part, I never was more surprised in my life than to find how light he made of this affair. I imagined he would have died rather than have opened his lips upon the subject to any one; but, since he is so very communicative, I see no reason why I may not be the same.

Madame de Vins informs me, that M. de Vendôme and M. de Morant are upon the point of setting out for

Provence; this will determine M. Grignan's plans, by giving him a prospect of the end of the career which he has run so nobly, and by which he has merited the brightest rewards: who knows but fate may have them yet in store for him? M. de Hautefort is dead, so there is another blue ribbon vacant. He could never be prevailed on to take the English medicine, because it was too expensive. He was told that at most it would not cost more than forty pistoles: "It is too much," said he, and then expired. Monseigneur has been cured by this specific; what will now become of the faculty?

Montgobert tells me, that you will certainly go to Paris; I shall write and thank her for this good news, and assure her how happy it makes me. Your brother's illness, by giving me a little concern, frees me from the apprehension that an uninterrupted joy would otherwise occasion me. Adieu, my beloved child; continue well, gather strength, eat, sleep, and recover your former health. Madame de Marbeuf is still here; she sends you a thousand compliments: she is determined not to leave my son, *till she has seen him hanged* *; she is the most friendly creature in the world. Poor count! he had reason, indeed, to hurry away to Toulon and Marseilles, to be at great pains to spend an immense sum of money, and, after all, to be obliged to go and meet M. de Vendôme: the thought of all this almost turns my poor head.

* See Moliere's *Médecin malgré Lui*, Act III. Scene 9.

LETTER DCLXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 13, 1680.

My son is in a truly pitiable situation; he is so thin, so shrivelled, so dejected, and his beard is of such a frightful length, that you would not know him again; in his intervals of ease, however, he plays at ombre, and chats: he loves to be petted, and thinks he begins to recover. It vexes me when I reflect for whom he suffers! for an ungrateful woman, nay, what is still worse, for a *Sylvia*, for whom he has not, nor ever had, any real love. Madame de Coulanges writes me very humorously, that his cure will be a source of public rejoicing. Her letter is very entertaining. She anticipates, as every one does that knows you, no small pleasure in the enjoyment of your society this winter, and in renewing old connexions. As M. de Coulanges is with you, I doubt not that you are very much pleased: now is the time for playing M. de Grignan a trick; it would be a good idea to put Coulanges in a box, or the abbé Viani's theorbo-case; for you cannot produce him simply as you would another person. I must confess I was altogether for the journey to Rome *: there were a thousand circumstances that rendered it agreeable; and I had, besides, a thousand little reasons of my own which I could still produce if they were wanted, but it would be like bringing an army into the field when there was no enemy to engage. I am extremely glad Coulanges has followed your advice, which was infinitely preferable to any other; I should be glad to see

* See Letter 18th September.

the little man again. Madame de Coulanges had no reason on her side to wish him to take this journey, for his company is far from being irksome to her.

What say you now, my dear child, of Montgobert's mind, or rather of her heart? Is it not exactly what I pronounced it to be? I was intimately acquainted with it, though it was hid under thorns, briers, and mists, which all proceeded from friendship, attachment, and jealousy: and when you said,

Qu'importe de mon cœur, si je fais mon devoir*?

I, you know, said just the reverse; I always wished some of those happy conversations to take place which so much contribute to restore drooping friendship, and in which every accent, every look, has its effect. I mentioned this to you, but the time was not come; every thing must have its time, even to the boiling of an egg; but, after all, I am surprised that Montgobert has not informed me of this good news, knowing, as she does, how much I am interested in it. Thus you see we must not always judge by appearances; you imagined there was no stability in her heart, and you have found the contrary. You may possibly find the same, with regard to that of your neighbour†; I have observed great affection and sensibility in that quarter. I am sorry you have not yet met with one of those eloquent moments in which you express yourself so well. This was not a friendship formed for saying, "I loved you once, but I love you no longer;" but to be solid and unshaken. The coolness that at present subsists between you and him is so much the more dangerous, as it is concealed beneath a smiling exterior, and the

* What signifies my heart, if I do my duty?

† The person here hinted at by madame de Sévigné was M. de la Garde, whose barony lay contiguous to that of M. de Grignan.

mask of civility; in short, there is an appearance of something without any foundation: this is your own description of it, "a perfect cessation of every kind of tie, confidence, and sentiment;" a curious friendship, indeed! a very curious friendship! I shall be apt to say like marshal de Gramont: "If I make you shake hands, gentlemen, I see no way of preventing you from cutting one another's throat whenever you please." All these things, however, will wear a different aspect when the time comes. I long most impatiently for the day which is to restore you once more to my maternal embrace.

Madame de Marbeuf is still with me; we are happy in her company, and she is so in ours; yet she will leave us, for no other reason that I know of, but because people cannot be contented when they are well off. She has written to M. de Coulanges to inform him of the good fortune of mademoiselle Descartes, to whom the duchess de Chaulnes has given a very pretty pension. This young lady is as wise as her uncle and yourself.

LETTER DCLXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October [illegible], 1684.

I AM highly pleased with your last letter; [illegible] too long, notwithstanding, and must have fat[illegible] otherwise it was very acceptable, and made [illegible] siderable part of our tranquil domestic am[illegible] nor would it have failed of finding a place, [illegible] midst of the dazzling pleasures of Versailles, [illegible] there. There are certain things in life, wh[illegible] jects, no dissipations, can ever drive from the remem-

brance. You still talk of this medicine; you must have been strangely in want of an abatement to your pleasure, to have taken what I said in the sense to which you applied it: I merely meant, that so mild and gentle a medicine was scarcely worth the trouble of swallowing: for my own part, I like a more violent one, such as purgative salts, and I omitted it only on account of the warm weather. In short, my child, I am as well as can be wished, and have found infinite benefit from my linseed tea. You are certainly capable of teaching me many things; but I will not apply to you, nor to any one in existence, for lessons of confidence and sincerity in friendship. You see what tone I assume. I should be unable to conceal from you any disorder I might labour under. I cannot deceive you; but do you, my child, act with the same openness towards me? do you tell me, without disguise, the true state of your health? Indeed I have lately received great comfort from Montgobert's letters; for, as she has frequently told me the truth, which you would sometimes conceal from me, I can place greater reliance on her present assurances of your amendment; but I cannot conceive how it happens that she has not said a syllable to me of the gratification she must have received from the perfect reconciliation that has taken place between you. Your different sentiments with regard to each other gave me no small dissatisfaction; I was perfectly acquainted with her heart, and could see to the bottom of it, through all the little mists and vapours with which it was obscured. You know I told you that I was sure you would find it as fair as you could wish; own, then, that I was not deceived, and that it is impossible for any one to love you otherwise than ardently: but, I trust, you are now entirely cured of your prejudices; I must still, however, return to the old strain, and declare my anger at Mont-

gobert for having so long delayed to make me a sharer in her happiness.

When I read how impossible it still is to you, to listen to mademoiselle de Grignan's noble resolutions, it brings the tears into my eyes: what can be the meaning of this emotion, this overflowing of the heart, respecting an event that we approve, applaud, and are pleased with? Her noble resolutions inspire every one who knows her with sentiments of admiration and affection. We consider her as a person distinguished by the particular grace of heaven. Tell me your sentiments upon this subject; let me know how you have planned your intended journey, and give me credit for all the heart-felt joy I experience on your approaching return, though indeed, if I wanted to lessen it, I need not look far. I have too serious a subject of uneasiness in my son. As his head-ache and fevers continue to baffle the power of all the medicines he has hitherto tried, I have endeavoured to persuade him to go to Paris, that fountain of good and evil; but he will not hear of it, he considers it all as a mere trifle. Good heavens! how little power I have over my children! He seems to think himself very happy where he is; he amuses himself with reading, chatting, and now and then playing at ombre. He is pleased with my attention to him, and I think myself happy in having it in my power to contribute to his comfort. He desires me to make his affectionate remembrances to you; he intends writing to you almost every post-day, but his pain hinders him from taking the pen in his hand. I know how all this terminates; we may perhaps be surprised with some agreeable and unlooked-for [illegible].

I find Coulanges is still with you; you charming figure, seated on a sack of apples of your fig-tree, with a basket of figs and grapes before

you! This is admirable, provided you have strength equal to your courage, and do not affect the airs of a robust personage; when in fact you are one of the most delicate. It is true, indeed, that M. de Coulanges promised me that he would keep a strict eye upon all your actions, and give me a faithful account of them; but I find, in his very first letter, that he has conspired with the rest, to flatter me.

I thought my son would have burst with laughing the other day, in spite of all his sufferings, at poor mademoiselle du Plessis, whose vanity is become quite insupportable, since I procured her the honour of a line from you. Happening, therefore, to say something the other day more impertinent than common, and said to her, "That is really very silly, not to use a harsher expression." My son stopped me short in the midst of this fine oration; which was a great pity, for it promised something extraordinary. You will say, perhaps, this is an anecdote very little worth committing to paper, but it happened to hit your poor brother's fancy; and so, my dear child, adieu.

LETTER DCLXXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 20, 1680.

When you receive this letter, you may say, "My mother is at Paris." I shall set out to-morrow morning, and my son accompanies me, in the hope of finding some relief in that great city, of which, with the poet, we may say,

Et cujus il fait les maux, il fait les medecines *.

* The cause and cure of every ill.

Our good, honest, and sincere physician, has fairly told us, that the distemper baffles his skill; that he does not dare hazard those remedies which alone seem likely to succeed; and therefore desires us to set out as speedily as possible, that we may consult persons more skilful and less timid than himself, assuring us that we may undertake the journey without any ill consequences. We have therefore determined on it; my son has suffered himself to be persuaded to undergo the fatigue, in the hope that health will be the reward of his toil. This has been the subject of our meditations for the last two days; a few hours have brought about what a whole month would not have effected in any other situation; and though I am retreating with the utmost precipitation, it has pleased Providence that I should be carried back to Paris by other motives than those of going to meet you. This early return, however, will give me an opportunity of getting your apartment ready to receive you.

You say you are perfectly well; I am sure it is happy for me if you are so; it would be more than I could well support to have both my children ill at once. You were in high spirits, my dear, when you wrote your last letter: nothing can be prettier than your jealousy: the application you make of it is admirable, and [illegible] me extremely. Adieu, my beloved child. [illegible] spend all my time in gossiping to you, [illegible] a thousand things to do; I must go and help the good abbé, and I have some papers to sign. I have had a farewell visit from the princess, who is extremely good and obliging, and from all the rest of the [illegible] who wished me gone long ago, but our hea[illegible] then turned; there must be a time for al[illegible] have detained madame de Marbeuf, who w[illegible] princess; she is very useful to us. The ro[illegible]

good, and God, I trust, will conduct us in safety. We flatter ourselves that we shall find a perfect cure in Paris, which has been refused us here through the high veneration in which we are held; but as that will not be the case where we are going, we depart full of hopes: I cannot sufficiently admire how chance has made the necessity of my setting out an instrument to forward what you seem so earnestly to desire, that I should be there ready to receive you on your arrival. I could never have imagined that things would have turned out thus.

LETTER DCLXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

Malicorne, Wednesday, October 23, 1680.

Well, here we are on our road to Paris, full of impatience to arrive there: and indeed there is no time to be lost in procuring relief for this poor boy; the constant pains in his head, the uneasiness this causes him, with a beard *à la Lauzun* *, have so changed him that you would with difficulty recognize him. We endeavour to render the journey as easy to him as possible, by going a snail's pace; and, as he can seldom get a wink of sleep till day-break, we cannot set out again till near ten o'clock in the morning, and we stop just where we can. We found it impossible to reach Sablé, and so took up our quarters in a little hen-roost not more than a few steps from that where I sweated so profusely five years ago. Be under no apprehensions however for your brother's safety; for, as I told you the other day, Paris will prove the Jordan from whence

* M. de Lauzun never would suffer his beard to be shaved while he remained in confinement at Pignerol.

he will come forth pure and immaculate; but, in the mean time, his state is deplorable.

You say you never mention Providence but when you have a disorder on your lungs, whereas that subject always exhausts mine, for I can find none that furnishes so large a field for discussion, observation, and enquiry; and why may we not discourse as well on this as on natural philosophy? Why did you not still say, as you did last year, that our fears, our reasonings, our decisions, our wills, our desires, are only so many means employed by God for the execution of his purposes? Is not this an inexhaustible subject, fraught with the most entertaining variety? For instance, I think it would be hardly possible to inform you of the half of what has passed at the Rocks, during these last two months: the confidence reposed in a person thought to be very skilful in his profession, the wilful blindness, the affected laziness, the fondness for home, the disregard of my advice, as well as that of every other friend who wanted us to be gone, from a want of proper disposition of mind, and the reasons that prevented me from contradicting, notwithstanding my aversion to a longer stay; all this, I say, has made such a farrago of sentiments and opinions, that it would give any one a disorder of the lungs only to recount them: all this appeared to me like a vast machine, of which Providence managed the springs and wheels, and the result of which, I thought, I could plainly foresee. Suddenly our black was turned to white; what before was such an object of delight, was now held in detestation; the hated Paris became the summit of ambition; my advice was listened to, and approved; my situation acknowledged; the case appeared in its true colours; and in two days away we posted, and are now burning with impatience to arrive on the banks of our Jordan, for

such it will prove after all. This subject would furnish us with infinite matter for conversation, my child; and although this hurry has not been altogether upon your account, I shall by this means be the better prepared to receive you. Believe me, there is no experiment in natural philosophy more amusing than the investigation of the connexion and diversity of our several sentiments; so that you see, *It is God's will*, may be paraphrased in a thousand different ways.

It is really excellent to desire me to tell the archbishop how much you are grieved at his departure; you do me and my poor letters infinite honour: I am, however, extremely happy that you find me serviceable to you in any respect.

I had quite forgotten to ask after madame de Ville-Dieu; did the attack prove fatal to her? I was informed of the departure of M. de Vendôme and your intendant, and I made exactly the same remarks as you did. Adieu, my dear child! it is time to go to bed; we have not been able to take a walk in any place; we must have some time to rest ourselves, for to-morrow we set out again. My abbé and our poor invalid send a thousand kind remembrances to you. In the midst of all the anxieties I have mentioned to you, I cheer myself with the pleasing prospect of soon beholding you, and embracing you with all the overflowings of maternal affection.

LETTER DCLXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, Wednesday, October 30, 1680.

I ARRIVED here last night, my beloved child, in the most delightful weather. If you are wise, you will make hay while the sun shines, and not wait till the

change of the moon, which may bring with it heavy rains and bad roads. I never saw the roads of Britany so good: you know why I came without losing a moment. I wrote to you from Malicorne, in what way we endeavoured to beguile the sufferings of your poor brother: we have at length succeeded so happily, that we have got rid of his fever and other complaints; so that it is now only to recover him, not to raise him from the dead; and this we are going to set about with all our strength.

I found the chevalier here on our arrival; we had a great deal of chat; he told me several particulars that were very agreeable, which I will communicate to you, for I fancy he has not thought it prudent to commit them to writing. I am delighted that he is in this house, and wish he could remain in it: however, he will not leave the neighbourhood, as his chief interest lies here; the knowledge of this, I believe, will add to the pleasure of your journey.

You desire me to receive you with true joy; alas, my child! how can it be otherwise? The chevalier and I have both seen your apartment; it is really very pretty, and I am sure will please you. I find madame de Ville-Dieu is to take Paulina with her; we had much rather she had come up with you, that would indeed have been a pleasure. M. de la Garde [illegible] me word, that Paulina took my advice last year, and tied herself to your apron-string in the prettiest manner imaginable. I shall never see her; you will console me, but nothing less than you can do it. I am [illegible] at a loss to guess your vexation, in not having [illegible] of the archbishop. Alas, my dear! what [illegible] to our minds in taking leave of a person of

* This relates to the archbishop of Arles, who was [illegible] years of age.

Whatever has the air of bidding an eternal adieu, must give pain to a feeling heart.

The songs M. de Coulanges has made are extremely good: your house must have been uncommonly thronged to stifle his vivacity: so large a company at once is too much; it wearies even me, with all my popular virtues. Thank heaven, you will not be in a way to ruin yourself this winter, either at Aix, or in your own house; how my heart exults at the certainty of your return! In short, I should be too happy, were it not for the alloy I find in my son's illness. The coadjutor is gone, he has settled the manner of M. de Vendôme's interview with M. de Grignan *: it is sufficient to know, once for all, how things are to be; and when the king's orders are followed, there is no room for complaint. I shall finish my letter this evening, when I will inform you of all that I have seen and heard.

I have now seen my good friends; madame de la Fayette spent the whole afternoon with me; she finds great relief from the asses'-milk; madame Schomberg does not appear to have supplanted me there, although there is a great intercourse of words between these two new friends. Do you not remember the remark we used to make of the pleasure there is in showing ourselves off to advantage to a new acquaintance? Nothing could be more just than this observation; every thing is new, every thing is an object of admiration, and praises are lavished out of number. There is a great deal more of vanity, in these friendships, than of esteem or confidence; so that, upon the whole, I do not think I am yet thrown into the rubbish-bag.

Montgobert has written me wonders about your re-

* Meaning the ceremonial that was to be observed between the duke de Vendôme and the count de Grignan, on the arrival of the former to take upon him the government of Provence.

conciliation; in future, I suppose it will be scarcely possible that you should be at variance. I knew her heart was sound: I saw through it, notwithstanding the briars, and thorns, and mists, that enveloped it.

It seems, then, that you have paid that visit after all, and that nothing could prevent you from tempting the precipices: you may say what you please to me about fields and bowling-greens, but the chevalier has told me that he was, on a similar occasion, obliged to drag you by force out of your litter, to prevent you from being dashed to pieces; for my part, I cannot conceive the pleasure you take in running these risks, or how you can so coolly contemplate the horrible gulfs that threaten to swallow you up every instant. What can induce you, my child, to pique yourself upon showing more intrepidity than the chevalier? Do you think your many amiable qualities stand in need of this additional one? The gaiety and songs of M. de Coulanges must certainly be of great service in these expeditions. Madame de Coulanges writes me a thousand kind things on your account as well as my own.

Madame de la Fayette, madame de Lavardin, the marchioness d'Huxelles, and madame de Bagnols, have furnished me with a whole budget of news. Mademoiselle Amelot was married last Sunday, without my knowing any thing of the matter, to a M. de Vaux, court, a spick-and-span new suitor; he is of a good family, though but of a middling fortune; he is of the house of Chalons. It has happened very well to prevent us from being teased this winter, as we were last, with her amorous languor.

Adieu, my dear child; we are all busied for your reception. Here is another instance of seasonable things that absence and distance may do; you tell me, you wish I could me

thinking I am to pass my winter in Britany: I was once very near doing so; but after all, here I am, my beloved child, here I am, to my great satisfaction.

LETTER DCLXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, Friday, All-Saints day, 1680.

I HAVE just informed madame de Coulanges that I am out of countenance at being in Paris at this season of the year, *having never been seen at such a feast before*; if the coadjutor * can relish this wretched pun, it is at his service. Madame de Coulanges informs me she has received so entertaining a letter from you, that she should never be tired of reading it; and you have the assurance to write me word, by the very same post, that your style is as flat and insipid as the lady's who wrote to M. de Coulanges in my letter. You deserve to be heartily scolded when you talk in this manner.

If you would have me speak to you without disguise, and agreeably to the dictates of sound reason, M. de Grignan ought to make you set out, without waiting till he has finished the ceremony of receiving M. de Vendôme; this delay will carry you far into the month of January, the thought of which is insupportable. M. de Vendôme stays at every place; he will be more than a week at Orleans, he will spend five or six days in hunting with the archbishop of Lyons; so you see that staying to receive him, conducting him to Aix, and bringing him back with you again, will take up a great deal of time; and it will be paying very little attention to your health or safety, thus to delay your journey. This is what my anxiety to every thing that respects

* The coadjutor was fond of playing upon words.

your comfort and welfare prompts me to write to you: I wish this piece of advice may prove as unnecessary, and come as unseasonably, as most of those things do, that pass between persons at such a distance as we are from each other; and that, when this letter arrives, you may already have fixed the day of your departure, as your letter expresses. Your apprehension, that I should pass the winter in Britany, found me snug in Paris.

After embracing you most cordially, my dear count, in spite of your infidelities, I must tell you, that the above is addressed to you; your affection ought to inspire you with the same anxiety, the same apprehensions, as those which actuate me.

It is said madame de Schomberg is going to leave us, and take up her residence in the fauxbourg St. Germain. It is really very amusing, to see the preparations that are made for the observance of the new league of amity between this lady and madame de la Fayette. The abbé Têtu maintains, that this intimacy will put madame de Coulanges out of all patience; and he is still so much her admirer, as to be delighted with the idea. Brancas is almost wild about it, and talks of madame de Schomberg, as if she were still at the hotel de Rambouillet. If madame de Coulanges should avenge herself on them all, by contracting a friendship and intimacy with you, it would have the most whimsical effect imaginable: for my part, I shall take great care of what I have already obtained, as a reward for my past services. Corbinelli and I are both of opinion that nothing is wanting in these preparations but friendship itself. Adieu, my dearest child! it grows late. I have been overwhelmed with visits. You always laugh at my foresight; but I cannot bear to drive things off to the last moment.

LETTER DCLXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, Wednesday, November 6, 1680.

I STILL advise you, my child, to set out as soon as possible; for if you stay till M. de Grignan has discharged all his duties, you must lay aside all thoughts of coming this winter. I should think his regard for you would not suffer him to expose you to the cold weather and bad roads: at least, such conduct would be unaccountable to me. You were certainly born never to taste a moment's repose or pleasure, since I find you passing so lightly over your stay in Paris, to dwell upon your return to Grignan. I believe few persons, except you, would perplex themselves with such thoughts amidst the hurry of a removal. For my part, my dear child, I cannot imagine what should make you think of leaving Paris; when once you are here, you will be lodged as comfortably as you can desire; your lease will be renewed for four years, your expences regulated; and if you, that is, M. de Grignan, should wish to avoid the very extraordinary ones you have long incurred, this is the only place in the world where you may take breath. As for Aix, it is a bottomless pit for money. I fancy that by this time you are somewhat cured of your Grignan economy, where you were to live for little or nothing; for it was nothing, it seems, nothing at all, to have four or five tables, to keep open house, and furnish entertainment for man and horse; a thing that no one in the world now thinks of doing: in short, say what you please, that famous caravansera of yours appears to me to teem with ruin; this concourse of people seems to me like the flood which carries all

before it. In short, my child, I dare not think of this vortex; Paris will prove your resting-place: stay here at least till you have confronted your expences, and can look your return in the face; but first let me see you here; that is the chief object of my wishes.

Mademoiselle de Meri has found apartments to her mind; she will have all the time she can desire to settle herself; nothing need hurry her: she sees plainly that I am much better pleased to have her here, while she can remain here, than to have farther to go for her. It was to bring her to a determination, that I wrote to you; for when people are irresolute, they can do nothing they wish. She is much better than she was; she can now talk herself, and hear others talk; we have a good deal of chat together every evening. Ah, my dear child, how easy is it for any one to live with me! how far will a little complaisance and sociability, or even the appearance of confidence, lead me! I believe no one in the world is more readily pleased in domestic life than myself. I wish you could only witness how smoothly every thing goes on, when my cousin chooses it should do so. She hinted to me the other day, that she had heard, in general terms, of my son's misfortune, and that she should very much like to know further particulars. I was not displeased at this curiosity, and therefore gave her a full account of the whole affair, besides relating other anecdotes, that I thought might be amusing to her. This is what I call living together as we should do: but when we cannot say any thing but what is answered rudely; when we endeavour to behave in the civilest manner possible, and yet nothing will please; when every subject we mention is heard with sullen silence, and the most well-known circumstances are concealed under an air of mystery; when facts are treated as falsehoods and calumnies, and distrust, ill-nature, and even aversion,

is manifested in every word, and every look; I must confess, such conduct vexes me to the heart, and I cannot help resenting it. I cannot accustom myself to these rough roads; and if it were only on account of having brought you into the world, a more gentle manner might be expected. And yet, my dear child, I have often experienced this disagreeable and unkind treatment: I should not mention it to you, but that, to my great satisfaction, the case is altered. If this change does but last, it will give me very great joy; yes, I repeat it, very great joy: you may believe me when I speak thus, for it is not often that I do so. This has not been a reconciliation, but a gradual restoration to health, by means of kind and unreserved conversations, and not of the nature of those that used to take place, as between persons who were strangers to each other. In short, I am quite satisfied; indeed a very little will satisfy me; and, upon occasion, I can consider a suspension of ill treatment as a mark of friendship. By what I have said, you may judge how pleased I should be, if civility, good nature, a show of confidence, an intercourse of familiar chat, and all the little attentions that should be maintained between persons who know what life is, could once more be established between her and me through your means. I perceive there is a settled coolness and indifference between M. de la Garde and you, by his affecting never to visit you when you are alone; and by his inviting every one of your family to his house except yourself: I am very much mortified at this misunderstanding, after your having been upon such pleasant and friendly terms: but we will reserve this subject for another opportunity.

I have just received your letter of the 30th of October; I have nothing farther to say, than that I am

here; I adopted the resolution of setting out immediately, and I have no reason to repent my having done so. You talk to me of the country as a desert or place of retirement: agreed, if you mean Livri or the Rocks; but with respect to Grignan, you must excuse me, if I can never be brought to allow it that name; it is a court, it is a perpetual scene of hurry, and Paris will be a retreat to you. I very much like to pass the holidays in our forest; you know how I spent them last year.

M. de Vendôme seems resolved to tire out your patience; for he thinks of nothing but amusing himself at every place he comes to. You do not yet know whether M. de Grignan's presence will be necessary at the first meeting of the states: it may be so; but this I am sure of, that if he should be obliged to attend them, you ought not to wait for him, notwithstanding the difference there may be between travelling alone, and having him for a guide; for this is not to be put in competition with the danger you run of having bad weather, and still worse roads. We have almost completed your apartment, so that in a very few days you will be the only piece of furniture wanting in it.

Adieu, my beloved child; come cheerfully and speedily; consider that your journey is a decisive stroke for your family; leave all disagreeable reflections behind you; and, for once, make no resistance. In short, my child, I recommend to your care the person who is dearest to me in the world; have a little consideration for yourself, in virtue of this title; if for no other reason. The chevalier is at Versailles; the dauphin and dauphiness are still ill with a fever, and the menins must do their duty. All your friends have been very kind to me. I hear no news; if I were at the Rocks, I should have enough to send you. It appears to me,

that mademoiselle de Grignan's zeal cannot keep within bounds, unless it be communicated:

A peine tout son cœur peut suffire à l'amour.*

She would make a very pleasing confidence to the abbé de la Vergne.

LETTER DCLXXX.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, Friday, November 8, 1680.

I MAKE a very different use of my guests † from what you imagine. I am sorry I did not set you right in this particular, before I left the Rocks. I am really very well pleased with having them here: I pass almost an hour and a half every evening in conversation with mademoiselle de Meri, and she seems to be so much at her ease, and to feel so persuaded that she need not hurry herself, that I am sure she is satisfied, though she does not say so. It is really an amusing study to observe the different manners of different people. As to the chevalier, I am delighted with his return from Versailles; we chatted together two hours last night in mademoiselle de Meri's apartment: he cannot yet quit his young master, who continues very ill. The English physician has engaged to the king so positively, even on the forfeiture of his head, to cure Monseigneur in four days, both of his fever and vomiting, that, if he should fail, I really believe they would throw him out of the window; and, on the other hand, should his pre-

* Her whole heart can scarcely suffice for love.

† Mademoiselle de Meri and the chevalier de Grignan were both lodged in the hotel de Carnavalet, on the arrival of madame de Sévigné at Paris.

diction prove as true in this case, as it has done in all the others he has had the management of, I shall say, that a temple ought to be erected to him, as a second Esculapius. It is a pity that Moliere is dead; he would make an excellent scene of Daquin *, who is driven to his wit's end, at not being possessed of this panacea; and the rest of the tribe, who are overwhelmed with despair at the experience, the success, and the almost divine prognostications, of this little foreigner. The king will have him make up his medicines in his presence, and trusts the management of the prince wholly to him. The dauphiness is already much better; and yesterday the count de Grammont saluted Daquin with the following stanza:

Talbot est vainqueur du trépas,
Daquin ne lui résiste pas;
La dauphine est convalescente,
Que chacun chante, &c.†

Nothing is talked of at court but this. The chevalier told me a thousand other things equally amusing, which cannot be written. I assure you, it is no bad thing to be established in those regions; it gives a certain familiarity, and favourable opportunities, that exist no where else.

I know nothing of your plans; but it is plain that M. de Vendôme is in no hurry to get to Provence: he is still at Orleans, amusing himself with stag-hunting; he intends to make some stay at Lyons; and if M. de Gri-

* First physician to the king.

† Daquin no longer can withstand
Talbot, victorious over death;
The princess owns his healing hand:
Let each one sing with joyful breath, &c.

This is a parody on the chorus in the first scene of the fifth act of the opera of Alceste.

gnan must be present at the assembly, and you are to wait till he sends you back your carriage, you will find yourself in the middle of January; and how can any one, who has the least love or regard for you, bear the thoughts of your travelling at that season of the year? In my opinion, health is to be preferred to every other consideration. We are still under dreadful apprehensions respecting your intended return in May; a courier only can support such fatigues: I am certain that you will find it impossible; and why then write or think of it? Besides, it would be ruinous, to be at such an expence in furnishing a house, purchasing clothes, and a thousand other articles, only for a stay of three months: it seems as if you took delight in spoiling the most agreeable journey in the world, and the most advantageous for your family. If you ask me what I have to do with it, and why I scold you thus; I shall reply, that I interest myself in my own affairs, and that; considering you and yours as a part of them, I cannot but be interested in every thing that concerns you, and that, whatever injures you, must likewise injure me. Can you, my dear child, entertain a thought of wasting your substance at Aix, or your health at Grignan, this winter? Indeed these things are ever uppermost with me; and strong and ardent as my desire is to see and embrace you, I would advise you not to come, if you intend to be gone again in an instant; this would be flying in the face of common sense.

We shall see if my son's illness has worked any change in his intentions; I much doubt it, especially in those relating to his place, which seem to have been long and deeply rooted in his mind. All sublunary events are the sport of Providence; I observe its workings, and am continually meditating on our state of dependence, and the diversity of our opinions; but the

sentiments of the heart are more profound, at least I judge so by my own: the affection which I feel for you, my beloved child, seems to me mixed with my very blood, and blended with the very marrow of my bones; it is a part of my essence; I speak what I feel.

[*N. B. Madame de Grignan arrived shortly after this letter. The mother and daughter remained together till September* 1684; *madame de Sévigné then went to the Rocks.*]

LETTER DCLXXXI.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Autun, December 28, 1680.

I HAVE just heard, my dear cousin, that you are in Paris with your daughter. I rejoice at the circumstance, because our correspondence will now be more frequent, and there is scarcely any thing I like so well as your letters. By the bye, madam, you do not know that I am going to make the king a party in this correspondence; *the king*, no offence, I hope. You know that I sent him a manuscript in June; I believe he was pleased with it, for he has asked for another. The one, therefore, that I shall send him on the first day of the new year, relates to events from the beginning of 1672 to the end of 1673; the three years of your life which you have written to me most frequently, and as your letters contain a great deal of wit, I am charmed with them. He will also see some of your daughter's, which will not displease him. I shall send you this manuscript in the spring, when I shall be at Paris, and you will be astonished to find that, though I am, I address the king with as much freedom as if he were his favourite.

LETTER *DCLXXXII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, January 2, 1681.

A HAPPY new year to you, my dear cousin. I take this opportunity of soliciting your pardon after so joyous a festival, by wishing you a thousand good things this year, followed by many others equally happy. It seems to me, that by thus softening your mind, I shall dispose you to forgive me, for having been so long without writing to you, and the pretty widow, whom I love so much. I left Britany for Paris on the 20th of October, which was much sooner than I expected. A month after, I had the pleasure of receiving my daughter here. I found her better than when she left me; the keen air of Provence, which was calculated to destroy her, has not destroyed her: she is as amiable as ever, and I defy you to see each other, and converse together, without loving one another extremely. I have always thought of you, and have said a thousand times, "I must write to my cousin de Bussy," but have never been able to accomplish it. I cannot help thinking there are little demons in the world, which prevent us from doing what we wish, merely for the sake of laughing at us, and of making us feel our weakness. They have had this gratification, and I have felt it in all its magnitude. We have a comet† here, which is also of very great mag-

† The reader will not be displeased with us for relating what Voltaire says on the appearance of this comet:

"Superstitious ideas were so rooted in mankind, that comets alarmed them even in the year 1680. It was almost dangerous to combat this popular terror. Jacques Bernoulli, one of the greatest mathematicians of Europe, in replying to the partisans of prejudice in regard to this

nitude; it has the most beautiful tail possible. All the great personages are in alarm, and believe that Heaven, intent upon their ruin, sends warnings to them by it. It is said, that cardinal Mazarin being given over by the physicians, his courtiers thought it necessary to honour his last moments by a prodigy, and accordingly told him of this comet, and how it alarmed them for his life. He had still strength enough left to laugh at their folly, and replied, that the comet did him too much honour *. Indeed, we might say with him, that human pride does itself too much honour, in believing that the stars are put into commotion by the death of any man. My long silence has not made me forget the charms of your translations †. Adieu, my dear

comet, says, that the head of the comet cannot be a sign of the divine anger, because it is eternal, but that the tail may be so. But neither the head nor the tail is eternal. It was necessary that Bayle should write a book against vulgar prejudices, which the present progress of reason has rendered less pointed than it was at that time." Siècle de Louis XIV.

We may add, that it was this comet which confirmed the assertion Cassini had made on the comets of 1664 and 1665, that these planets had a periodical course, which might be calculated by astronomers with sufficient certainty for them to predict the exact period of their return.

At this epocha there were two sorts of errors in circulation respecting comets. To know the errors of the ignorant, read *Pensées sur la Comète* (Thoughts on the Comet), by Bayle. To know the [illegible] of the better-informed, peruse a dissertation by the learned Huet

* Bayle has cited this passage in his Thoughts on the [illegible]

† These are translations in verse of several epigrams of [illegible] Catullus; but they are in general very mediocre. This is [illegible] and perhaps the best:

Ad Fidentinum. Lib. i. ep. 39.

Les vers que tu nous dis, Oronte, sont les miens;
Mais quand tu les dis mal, ils deviennent les tiens.

The verses thou citest, Orontes, are mine;
But by speaking them badly, thou makest them thi[illegible]

cousin; my dear niece, adieu. Let me hear from you soon. In the mean time, Corbinelli and I are going to resume the thread of our discourse.

LETTER *DCLXXXIII.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE MOULCEAU †.

Paris, Friday, January 9, 1681.

I SHOULD be very sorry, sir, if our correspondence were to end with the temple of Montpellier; and all you say to this effect, in doing the honours of your letters, by supposing the assurance of their continuance to contain a threat to me, is so ungenerous, that I should be disposed to scold you; nor would the pretty turn you have given to this, guarantee you from my reproaches, were it not that the letter you have written to my son makes me eager to tell you, how much it has delighted me. The neatness of the beginning has reminded me of our merry stories, and the beauty of the verses has made me regret, that you have not continued them in good earnest. If you have done so, let us share the pleasure of reading them: the two Latin verses you explain are very just: in short, we esteem your verse, your prose, and all your productions. My son is still your adorer; my daughter admires and esteems you in the highest degree; I presume you know my own sentiments for you,

† M. de Moulceau was president of the chamber of accounts of Montpellier; it appears that madame de Sévigné, at the time of her journey into Provence, had found him on terms of strict friendship with M. and madame de Grignan, and M. de Vardes and Corbinelli, and that she was so sensible of his worth, and the charms of his mind, as to enter into a correspondence with him. But we remark with astonishment, that no mention is made of this interesting man in any of the preceding letters.

and that you see plainly, there is not a family in the world who so justly appreciates your merit. You do the same in regard to M. de Carcasonne, by praising him as you do. The poor chevalier has been here for these six weeks, laid up with the rheumatism; he receives visits from persons almost as lame as himself; those who are left-handed, show at least that their taste is right. You have returned M. de Noailles to us in a very ill state of health. He has so violent a diarrhœa, that it seems as if he had eaten to his own share all he has expended at Montpellier; in short, he has been obliged to resign the staff, the staff that was the object of his love, the staff he went so far to assume, the staff which was the reward of all his other services: it is natural to suppose that he must be very ill, when he gives it himself to M. de Luxembourg. You say much in his favour, when you speak of the distinction and expansion of heart he showed you: I wish his generosity had gone so far as to have induced him to return our mortified friend's visit*. Have I not heard you say that we ought to respect the unfortunate? it cannot be doubted, that this has increased the mortification. I pity him for having suffered this feeling to take

* Anne Jules, duke de Noailles, had been nominated to the command in Languedoc, of which the duke du Maine, then too young to take it upon himself, had just been appointed governor. [illegible] were making for the destruction of Calvinism. In conjunction [illegible] intendant d'Aguesseau, father of the celebrated chancellor, [illegible] endeavoured for a long time to engage the court to employ [illegible] and even in the execution of the most rigorous, he at first [illegible] humanity: but he afterwards became one of the most violent [illegible] tors, and his dispatches, concerted with Louvois, did not [illegible] the king to rigours, of which he too late repented.

It appears that he thought he could not with propriety, [illegible] tion he held, return the visit of M. de Vardes, then an exile, [illegible] madame de Sévigné designates by the title of the mortified [illegible]

possession of him, and to have surmounted even his Christian philosophy; but I pity him still more if your heart be yet closed against him: a friend like you would be a true consolation in all his afflictions. Our *friend* (Corbinelli) is entirely occupied here with his affairs; he does wonders; he is become the best lawyer in Paris; and this qualification came to him unexpectedly along with his peruke and brandenbourg; so that we should much sooner have taken him for a captain of cavalry, than a man of business. It is thus the exterior often deceives us. If M. de Vardes had not thrown him into this employment, his gratitude and inclination would lead him straight to you; his heart is still perfect in all the moral virtues: they will become Christian virtues, when it shall please Providence, whom we still adore, and who seems to treat you well, by the sentiments it inspires you with. Adieu, my dear sir; we should have many things to say to each other if we met: who knows that some day or other we may not? Our friend writes to you separately; so much the worse for him: he will not know that I have the pleasure of assuring you here of my sincere and faithful friendship.

LETTER DCLXXXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY †.

Paris, January 10, 1681.

It is singular that we should both have roused ourselves at the same time, I believe on the very same day, and that our letters must have crossed each other. I have observed that this frequently happens. But, my dear

† This Letter is an answer to that of Bussy dated December 28, 1680.

cousin, you tell me a strange story; I could never have guessed the third person who composed our trio. Do you think the letters you have sent will be considered of the smallest value? All my hope is, that you have corrected them. Do you suppose either that my style, which is the expression of friendship and affection, may not be misinterpreted? I have never seen a letter in the hands of a third person, that might not be misconstrued; and it would be a great injustice to the simplicity and innocence of our long friendship, if that were the case. I should be delighted to see all this, but how is it to be managed? I am certain, whatever I say, that you have done every thing for the best, and it is no small honour to amuse such a personage, and to correspond with him. I have no doubt, that a lady, who is one of my old friends, and who spends two hours with him every day, in his closet, will read your Memoirs with him; and it will be fortunate for you, from the taste and judgement she possesses, that they will fall into such good hands. Who knows what Providence may have in store for us?

I rejoice, that Madame has given so fine an estate to our happy widow. She makes you also happy by the sweetness of her affection, and her faithful attachment to you. She is a worthy creature, and I esteem her highly. Embrace her for me, and receive both the friendship and remembrances of my daughter. It would give her great pleasure, if you were to return during her stay here. Her health is in so delicate a state, that it makes all who love her tremble. Adieu, my dear cousin. Our friend is here, still as much yours as ever. We will write to you together. Let us know frequently how your correspondence goes on (with the king).

LETTER *DCLXXXV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, April 3, 1681.

Let us make peace, my poor cousin. I am to blame, and when I am so, I never hesitate to own it. I hear my niece is not very well. We cannot be completely happy in this world: circumstances of this kind are retributions of Providence, that every thing may be equal, or that the happiest may be able to understand by a little vexation and pain, what those endure who are overwhelmed with them.

I wished you to have had a share in the lottery, as a means of beginning to break the ice of your misfortune. Is this expression allowable? You will let me know; for I never can correct what flows naturally from my pen. It might at least have put you in train to be less unfortunate; but I think, if it had been so, my niece of Sainte Marie would have known it, and have sent me word of it. I am afraid, too, your son has gained nothing; but our hopes are still alive with respect to the capital prize; the king having given it again to the public. The Bourbon journey is set aside. But I send you nothing but vile repetitions: your son will undoubtedly inform you of every thing. The court has wished to call him M. de Bussy. The name of Rabutin is at a stand, like that of Adhémar, which the chevalier de Grignan wished to take, and which Treville alone prevented from succeeding. The attachment of courtiers to names is necessary. The name of Estrées is loaded with all the titles that can grace a family.

But we ought not to abandon ourselves to melancholy

and useless reflections: it is much better to believe, as our friend Corbinelli daily preaches to me, that God regulates all things according to his will, and that the place you hold in the universe, such as it is, cannot be altered. Father Bourdaloue gave us a sermon the other day against human prudence, which plainly showed, that it is entirely subject to the will of Providence, and that the prudence only which is given by God unto salvation profits us any thing. Such are my reflections during the holy week, which are not less in conformity with devotion than with the grief I always experience, when I see that, except yourself, every one seems to obtain promotion; for in the midst of my sage maxims I betray a great deal of weakness.

I know not whether you have heard, that the beautiful Fontanges is in a convent, not so much for the sake of passing this holy festival, as to prepare herself for a journey into the other world †.

Adieu, my dear cousin; adieu, my amiable niece: continue to love me, and let me hear from you.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.
(A FRAGMENT *).

[illegible] April 10, 1661.

I HAD no inclination to have a s[illegible] less it had been such a one as [illegible] which no one, out of all those t[illegible] had a prize.

If these times continue, the sa[illegible] through the hands of the king. [illegible]

† She died shortly after. It is said [illegible] affirms it in her letters, but madame de [illegible] moirs.

says to the sick whom he touches, "The king touches thee, may God heal thee;" he says also to the women he loves, "The king kisses thee, may God protect thee."

LETTER * DCLXXXVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Paris, May 22, 1681.

I HAVE seen, sir, the marquis de Toiras, whom you sent to me a second time. I consider him highly deserving of your esteem, and of the esteem of all who know him. You praise his person to me, and the qualities which are inseparable from his name; and I praise them to others. I have quite a religious veneration for this family: it is a sentiment I have imbibed from my earliest youth; and I have heard by tradition, that the marshal would have married my mother, if the treachery and unkindness of death had not snatched away this hero. Select, therefore, sir, other objects to exercise the power your opinions would have over me, for on this occasion you have found the sentiments with which you would inspire me, already formed to your hands. We have also seen M. and madame de Rohan again. Alas, how thin they are grown! they would give us but a bad idea of M. de Vardes'† hospitality, if we were not well acquainted with it, and with the drought of their constitutions. In short, they are returned as they set out. Adieu, sir: I preserve you here, or rather, your merit preserves all hearts to you here; not one has lost a particle of its desire to serve you. For myself, I am steady in my attachment to friends like you; few of your stamp are to be found, and I place you by the side of our dear

† Madame de Rohan was his daughter.

friend, deeming you both worthy of the affectionate regard of those who have engaged to love you.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI.

I say the same, my friend, of M. de Toiras, and I add, that he appeared to me made into a preserve of sweetness and courtesy, his exterior at the same time answering to his interior good qualities, which manifested themselves every moment in his conversation. In short, from all I saw of him, I found him exactly as you described him to me, and I am really glad of this for his own sake, and the sake of those who love him, and you among the rest. Madame de Rohan has told me, that you are still cold to her father. Can nothing warm you in his favour, after the example I give you of what I have done for the daughter? I have seen her then, I have offered her my services, and we shall live, as they say, as if nothing had happened. I calculate, that I shall pay you a visit about midsummer. I have given my landlord warning, and am going to leave my lodgings, so that I am disposed to take flight from this part of the world, which is the summary of all evils. What say you to Gourville's conversion? M. de Tournay gave me the intelligence the other day, a[illegible] piece of news to all the servants of God [illegible] of this title, reserving my share t[illegible] shall please God to work mine: [illegible] Adieu, my dear friend: I still follo[illegible] rigour the law, that I may form [illegible] after your model to hold a place i[illegible] compliments to your amiable fam[illegible] alked of, from presentiments foun[illegible]

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I BEG my compliments to your lady and her amiable daughter; I entreat you to restore our friend to your heart, after the example of our other friend: it is too much to be the only exile in the world, and to lose a friend like you.

LETTER *DCLXXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, April 17, 1682.

IF you are alarmed at the appearance of my neglect, be assured, sir, it is a false alarm, and that appearances are deceitful: you do not suffer yourself to be forgotten: Rochecourbières, Livri, and the days in which we have seen you, are faithful guarantees of what I say; and I am certain you believe it, and that, being so well informed on every other subject, Christian humility does not prevent you from knowing your own worth. It is a truth, therefore; you cannot be forgotten. Our *friend* and I have said a thousand times, Let us write to this poor *reprobate*; but by continually delaying it, we have embarrassed ourselves by our miserable security. It seems to me as if Montpellier has given a great deal to the jubilee. You know what a horror Corbinelli has of this sort of parade, which he calls hypocrisy. I do not know exactly how he has acted upon the occasion, and I have not dared question him; but, considering the extreme respect he has for this holy mystery, and how rigorously he enters into the preparations for it, of which he will not abate a single iota, I have long been tempted to say to him, *basta la metà* (the half is sufficient); for, in fact, if all the faithful were to follow his

ideas upon the subject, the ceremonials of religion would be done away. This is the inspiration of God, and whether it be light or dereliction, some great change must happen to alter his opinions. M. de Vardes has put the same question to him, that you put to me on his jubilee: he has answered very honestly, and has given him a *probet autem semetipsum homo*, which may occasion great reflections. This is all I can tell you: you know and love the soil, for indeed the more his heart is known, the more it must be admired. I perceive his departure approach, and I perceive it with sorrow; but what may not Providence reserve for M. de Vardes? M. de Bussy is recalled after an exile of eighteen years; he has seen the king, who received him most graciously: these are times of justice and clemency; we not only do what is well, but what is perfectly well; I doubt not, therefore, that this poor exile's turn will come, and every one else believes it so firmly, that if any thing can do him injury, it is this general report. You tell me the most agreeable truth I can hear, in assuring me the young people will bring from Languedoc all the politeness which failed them here *: they appear to me like the Germans who are sent to Angers to learn the language; they were Germans in manners, and if they had not learned them out of court, would seem to conduct themselves ridiculously: it is easy to comprehend, that, having had to [illegible] and a master as M. de Vardes for six months, they must have profited more than they had done during their whole life. This return leaves a void which our friend will fill very agreeably; you will inform us of the progress of this economical colic, to which [illegible]

* This refers to the daughter and son-in-[illegible] (M. and madame de Rohan), who had spent six [illegible]

must become the midwife. If you understand this period, well and good; if it appears obscure to you, place it to the account of the rodomontade you have taught us. The zeal of the chevalier de Grignan is still as fervent as ever upon a certain subject, and he only waits opportunities to put it in practice: the objections I made you do not originate with him, and I answered for him readily: in short, he is as you left him. Some people would lose a great deal, if they were subject to change. Not so with regard to my daughter's health; she is much better than when you left us; her face would remind you of the face you have seen at Grignan. M. de Grignan, his daughters, his son, and our good abbé, are all as well as can be wished. Mademoiselle de Grignan's devotion is increased, and will increase still, for she draws from an inexhaustible source. The devout friendship of madame de Verneuil for me is nearly in the same style of magnificence: she displays the same perseverance we have mutually shown for each other for upwards of thirty years. The liberty of speaking thus of a princess, and the antiquity of the date, oblige me to conclude this article. I bid you therefore adieu, my dear sir, after having entreated you not to praise the king so much on the last action you have informed us of, as to make you forget all the others; let us always celebrate his great name both by sea and land, and let us admire him upon every occasion. The whole house of Carnavalet loves, esteems, and embraces you. I kiss the hands of your lady, and your amiable daughter. Tell us upon what terms you are with our friend: time changes things so oddly, that I always want to be informed of his operations, convinced that six months are sufficient for him to make reconciliations or quarrels.

LETTER *DCLXXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, Wednesday, May 1, 1662.

I WROTE to you the day before yesterday with extreme pleasure, believing that the report which prevailed in Paris of the return of the prince of Conti to Versailles, was well-founded; but I have heard, that I wrote you a falsehood, which is the thing in the world I hate the most. This prince is simply named to be one of the four chevaliers at the Pentecost, and will not return till that period: God grant he may remain when he comes! † It is a sad thing, sir, to be obliged to contradict so charming a piece of intelligence, but I am not the only one who has been deceived.

Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?

By way of remuneration, I must tell you, that mademoiselle de Grignan assumes on Friday the grand habit of the grand Carmelites: this is a truth I shall not contradict.

Mademoiselle d'Alerac fatigues and ruins herself for the carousal: admire the different occupations of the two sisters! I am glad you are satisfied with M. de la Trousse: this confident fellow, who induced me to tell you a falsehood so readily, will not perhaps prevent me from telling you more, for I am the judge of circumstances, and this article of intelligence was full of them.

† This prince, as well as his brother, had [illegible] permission for the Hungarian war. They were [illegible] were exiled. They afterwards obtained [illegible] campaign. But circumstances which will be [illegible] to be exiled anew on their return.

LETTER *DCLXXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, May 26, 1682.

WERE you not very much surprised, sir, to see M. de Vardes slip through your fingers, whom you had held so firmly for nineteen years? This is the time Providence had marked out for him; in reality, he was no longer thought of, he appeared forgotten and sacrificed to example. The king, who reflects and arranges every thing in his head, declared one morning, that M. de Vardes would be at court in two or three days: he said he had written to him by the post, that he wished to surprise him, and that for more than six months no one had mentioned his name to him. His majesty was gratified; he wished to create surprise, and every one was surprised: never did intelligence make so great an impression, nor so great a noise, as this. In short, he arrived on Saturday morning with a head singular in its kind, and an old justaucorps à brevet †, such as was worn in the year 1663. He set one knee to the ground in the king's chamber, M. de Chateauneuf being the only person present. The king told him that while his heart had been wounded, he had not recalled him, but that he now recalled him with a whole heart, and that he was glad to see him. M. de Vardes made an admirable reply, with an air of being deeply affected, and the gift of tears, which God has given him, produced no ill effect upon this occasion. After this first

† This was a blue great coat, embroidered with gold and silver, which distinguished the principal courtiers: an especial permission was necessary to wear it. The fashion had passed when Vardes returned to court.

interview, the king caused the dauphin to be coated, and presented him to him as a young courtier. M. de Vardes recognised, and saluted him: the king said to him, laughing: "Vardes, this is a blunder, you know that no one is saluted in my presence." M. de Vardes replied in the same tone: "Sire, I have forgotten every thing; your majesty must pardon even thirty blunders." "Well, I will," said the king, "stop at the twenty-ninth." The king afterwards laughed at his coat. M. de Vardes said: "Sire, when a man is so wretched as to be banished from your presence, he is not only unfortunate, but he becomes ridiculous." All this was said in a tone of perfect freedom and playfulness. The courtiers performed wonders. He came one day to Paris, and called upon me; I was just gone out to call upon him, but he found my son and daughter at home, and in the evening I found him at his own house: it was a joyful meeting: I mentioned our friend to him. "What, madam! my master! my intimate friend! the man in the world to whom I owe the greatest obligations! can you doubt that I love him with my whole heart?" This pleased me highly. He resides with his daughter at Versailles. The court goes to-day; I suppose he will return, to catch the king again at Auxerre, for it appears to all his friends, that he ought to take this journey; in which he will certainly pay his court well, by bestowing the most natural praises on three little things, the troops, the fortifications, and his majesty's conquests. Perhaps our friend will tell you all this, and my letter will be only a miserable echo; but at any rate I have entered into the enquiries, because I should like, on such an occasion, to be written to in the same style, and I judge you, my dear sir, by myself; I have often been deceived by others, but never by you. It is said, that your worthy and gene-

rous fri[illegible], M. de Noailles, has rendered very important services to M. de Vardes; he is so generous, that it is impossible to doubt this. M. de Calvisson is arrived; this must either break off, or conclude, our marriage. In reality, I am weary of this tedious affair, I am not in a humour to talk of any thing but M. de Vardes; M. de Vardes for ever: he is the Gospel of the day.

LETTER *DCXC.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, July 28, 1689.

You are going to hear a beautiful and an admirable story; pay great attention to every circumstance attending it. The prince de Conti having expressed himself dissatisfied with the chevalier de Lorraine, because he had said the prince de la Roche-sur-Yon was in love with his wife, found an opportunity of telling him two days ago, in the gardens of Versailles, that he would do him the honour of fighting him, because he had offended him by his conversation, &c. The chevalier de Lorraine thanked him for the honour he intended him, and wished to justify himself in what he had said; after which the prince told him, that he might have M. de Marsan for his second: who, hearing himself named, stepped forward and accepted the office without hesitation, desiring the prince de Conti to allow M. de Soissons to be the other second, as he had long been [illegible] enemy to their family. The proposal was yielded to; the party was formed, the place appointed, the hour chosen, and secrecy enjoined. Cannot you fancy yourself in the times of the late M. de Bouteville? Each went his way; but the chevalier de Lor-

raine went straight to Monsieur, to whom he related the whole story, and Monsieur the next moment confided it to the king. You may guess what he said to his son-in-law: he talked to him for two hours, with more of gaiety than anger, but in a tone of authority, which must have caused great repentance. Here the affair ended. The public thinks the chevalier de Lorraine ought to have refused upon the spot, instead of consenting, and then betraying every thing; but people of the trade think a refusal would have excited some angry words from the prince, and perhaps some menace not very easy of digestion: and then to have such a stigma cast upon him, and from a man who is so much to be dreaded! In this way his conduct has been approved, and the more so, because his courage is unquestionable. What say you to this affair? how does it appear to you to be handled? Alas! if that sainted princess were to descend from heaven, and to find her dear son troubled with such impetuosity, do you not think she would retrace her steps from grief and affliction? You will talk this over with M. de Vardes. Would to God, that the birth of a duke of Burgundy, which is hourly expected, could restore him to us!

I am still delighted with your correspondence with the *contrary of left*: you make me love Serignan, without ever having seen him: I have caused it to be reported to him, that we are nearly related through your means, and that the esteem I entertain for him is extraordinary as his merit. It is true, that the chevalier de Calvisson has not been to see madame de Grignan: I dare not say what I think of this [illegible] is her friend, but he will never convince me that, her husband having fulfilled all his du[illegible] reserve is good policy. The intendan[illegible] be guilty of very bad policy, if he di[illegible]

brother as he ought: in any case, he will be made acquainted with his duty.

The young son of the count de Roye, aged sixteen, being at Rome with the duke de la Roche-Guyon and M. de Liancourt, his cousins, received so charming a little ray of saving grace, that, after a very serious lecture, he placed his abjuration in the hands of the pope, and had the honour to receive the sacrament from his holiness himself. This event is fortunate for him, both in regard to this world and the next: his whole family is in despair.

There are continual entertainments at Versailles, saving the accouchement of the dauphiness; for the physicians not being able to do her any other harm, have been so much out in their calculations, that they bled her towards the end of the third month, and again in the eighth, from the mere rage of doing something. I seem, sir, to have been talking to you a long time; the reflection comes rather late; I pity you that it does, and entreat you to understand all the esteem and friendship, formed on purpose for you, which is in my thoughts, and of which I spare you the recital. Our good abbé returns you a thousand thanks for your remembrance of Livri. All our household sends you compliments more or less serious. M. de Grignan is gone to Provence; my son is still in Flanders.

[N. B. *The original of this letter was given to the count de Grasse for Mr. Walpole, who wished to have a letter of madame de Sévigné's in her own hand-writing.*]

LETTER *DCXCI.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, August 7, 1682.

The dauphiness was delivered yesterday evening (Thursday) at ten o'clock, of a duke of Burgundy †: your friend will inform you of the joy of the whole court, and what eagerness was displayed to evince it to the king, to the dauphin, to the queen; what noise, what bonfires, what effusions of wine, what dances of two hundred yeomen at the gates of the palace, what shouts of *vive le roi*, what ringing of bells at Paris, what firing of cannon, what crowds of compliments and harangues—and all this must have an end!

LETTER *DCXCII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, December 20, 1682.

If as little justice were to be done you, my very unjust cousin, as you do me, I should not advise you to return to Paris. You judge rashly; you say I have not written to you upon the marriage of my niece de Rabutin. I sincerely hope our friend Corbinelli, with his upright and accurate mind, will show you the consequence of this sort of hasty sentence. Know, therefore, noble sir, to your confusion, that I did write to you in our friend's letter. Seek for it, and ask my pardon.

† Benserade said on this subject, that this prince would some day be one of the bravest men in the world, because, even at his present age, he had made the prince (the great Condé) fall back.

But I must tell you, that justice is done here to love. The count de Soissons * has declared his marriage with mademoiselle de Beauvais. The king has received the new princess very graciously. She is handsome and modest. It is said she has been married two years and a half, and that fearing possession would damp the fires of the future, she granted no favour till the day on which she attained her twenty-fifth year, which was last Friday. There is much to be said on this subject, and we will enter upon it largely some day, when you dine here, on your return: has she done well? has she done ill? For, in short, when a man of this rank gives a woman the strongest proof of love he can bestow, by marrying her, can she remain for two years and a half without showing any feeling, but that of extraordinary and complete ambition, supported by great distrust and extreme coldness? I recollect a verse of Ariosto's, at which I have formerly laughed: Angelica had traversed the four quarters of the globe with Rolando, and he assures the reader that she was as pure as when she left her father's house, and the author adds,

Forse era ver, ma però non credibile †.

Be that as it may, she has succeeded; of this there can be no doubt.

The king has given the count de Soissons a pension of twenty thousand livres; for madame de Carignan (his grandmother) in a fit of despair disinherited him, and his mother has long thrown the *exheredation* upon him. On another side, the marquis de Richelieu has run away with mademoiselle de Mazarin from the convent of Sainte Marie de Chaillot. She is flying with her lover, who I suppose is her husband, while her

* One of the three elder brothers of the famous prince Eugene.

† Perhaps it was true, but it appears incredible.

father goes to Grenoble, La Trappe, and Angers, to consult whether he ought to marry his daughter †. Is it possible not to lose one's patience with such a fool? M. de Marsan was married to madame d'Albret yesterday. I do not think love was present at this entertainment ‡. My daughter has been very ill; she is recovered, and I am recovered with her, for you and I feel all that our children suffer. I embrace your daughter and you too, provided you make me satisfaction.

LETTER * DCXCIII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, October 21, 1684.

How happy you are, my poor cousin, to be at your country-seat, reposing your body and your mind, which have been so agitated during your last journey! I have felt your misfortunes more keenly than I have told you; and as to your malady, I am glad you are satisfied, for I am not so, and I could have wished to have told you more frequently, how much I am grieved at this additional evil. There are certain periods in life difficult to bear: but you have a greater degree of courage than most men, and as the proverb says, "God tempers the

† The following is a passage from Bruyère, which relates to this adventure:

"To commit a folly, and marry for love, is to espouse Melita, who is young, handsome, prudent, economical, who pleases you, who loves you, who has less wealth than Egina who is proposed to you, but who, with a rich portion, brings a rich disposition to consume it, and all your property with it.

‡ Postscript by Corbinelli.—This addition is wanting to the news of M. de Marsan's marriage: that the king caused him to be informed, on the very same day, that he intended his wife's apartment and the situation she held with the queen, for another person. Thus the most suitable of the three matches is the most unfortunate.

wind to the shorn lamb." I know not what character you give me in your Rabutinage. I am a little chicken-hearted personage (une petite poule mouillée), as I think sometimes; but if I had been a man, could I have brought this disgrace upon my family, in which boldness and valour seem to be hereditary? After all, I believe not; and I understand by this the force of education. As women are allowed to be weak, they take advantage of their privileges without scruple, and as men are told that their merit consists in the love of glory, all their thoughts tend to this point; and this forms French bravery, more or less, according to the difference of temperament. This language is useless enough from my pen; but I am going to comfort you by resigning it to Corbinelli, who will tell you all the news † he has heard, as soon as I have embraced the father and daughter with the utmost cordiality, conjuring them to be the mutual consolation of each other's life.

LETTER * DCXCIV.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, December 4, 1683.

If you knew, my poor cousin, what it is to marry a son, you would excuse me for having been so long without writing to you. I am in the bustle of a very active correspondence with mine, who is in Britany, and on the point of marrying a young woman of a noble family, whose father is a counsellor in parliament, and possessed of an income of more than sixty thousand livres a year.

† This news is, the first hostilities on the frontiers of Flanders, and a few details of an important victory gained over the Turks by Jean Sobieski, king of Poland. The postscript was not thought of sufficient consequence to merit insertion.

He gives his daughter two hundred thousand francs, and, as times go, this is a great match *. There have been a thousand things to settle before the signing of articles, which took place a few days ago. I heartily wish you the same embarrassment, my dear cousin; and, in that case, I promise to receive your excuses for any delay in writing to me, as I conjure you to accept mine, after permitting me cordially to embrace you.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI.

I REJOICE, sir, that your health is so perfectly re-established; continue to be careful of it. The council of Spain has resolved to declare war against us, as appears by what the king of Spain has written to Monsieur†. We carry our arguments to extremes on the blustering pride of a nation we have so often insulted with impunity, and whom we might insult again, after the prince of Orange has been sent from the States, of whom he has been asking commissions for sixteen thousand men. But the politicians say that it is a stroke of despair on the part of the Spaniards, which displays considerable dexterity, and that they are unwilling to be burthened with the protection of the rest of Flanders, which is of no real use to them, and only serves to bring them into difficulties; that by this step the Dutch and Flemish will either be engaged in the war, or will refuse to engage in it, and that Spain will be very glad to give them a master, and be released from the protection of the provinces, which are no longer any thing but skin and

* On the eighth of February, in the following year, M. de Sévigné espoused Jeanne Marguerite de Brehant de Mauron, an amiable and virtuous woman.

† The declaration of war was published at Brussels on the eleventh of December following. The French had already taken Courtrai and Dixmude, and bombarded Luxembourg.

bone. This is the way in which we reason here upon this unlooked for audacity.

LETTER *DCXCV.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, December 18, 1683.

At length, after so much difficulty, I shall succeed in marrying my poor boy. I request you to send me your letter of attorney for signing the marriage-articles. I enclose two letters upon the subject to my aunt de Toulonjon, and my great-cousin. We should never despair of our good fortune. I thought my son's situation quite hopeless, after so many storms and shipwrecks, without employments, and out of the way of fortune; and while I was indulging these melancholy reflections, Providence destined, or had destined, us to so advantageous a marriage, that I could not have wished for a better alliance, even at the time when my son had the greatest reason to expect it. It is thus we grope in the dark, not knowing our way, taking good for evil, and evil for good, in entire ignorance. Could you have supposed also, that father Bourdaloue would have delivered the most beautiful funeral oration it is possible to conceive, six days ago, to the Jesuits, in compliance with the last will of the president Perrault? Never has an action been admired with greater justice than this. He has taken the prince † in the most favourable points of view; and as

† This prince was Henry II. de Bourbon-Condé, the son of a great man, and the father of a great man, without any thing extraordinary in himself; it was he who took his wife to the Netherlands, to secure her from the too pressing gallantries of Henry IV.; a precaution which she did not take in very good part. He was as avaricious as he was disagreeable. He died in 1646. The president Perrault had long managed the affairs of the house of Condé. He was succeeded by Gourville.

his return to religion has produced a powerful effect for the catholics, this branch of the subject, treated by a Bourdaloue, formed the most beautiful and Christian panegyric that was ever pronounced.

LETTER *DCXCVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Paris, March 1, 1681.

It is true I have been to blame in not informing you of the conclusion of my son's marriage, but the circumstance itself must plead my excuse. Ask our friend Corbinelli what it is, to have to do with Low-Bretons: every head is confused, and it is impossible to think of M. de Moulceau, when we are making a contract in the generality of Ploermel: the one idea excludes the other; your remembrance cannot dwell in a memorial crammed with all the incidents which have attended our marriage, even to the nuptial benediction. This was bestowed on the eighth of last month, and from that moment I began to breathe, and to think that there was in the world the antipode of our father-in-law, who was called M. de Moulceau. This thought restored me to life, and your letter arrived very opportunely to answer for the ideas we had formed of you. Our Corbinelli has come in for a share of my hurricane, for he is not sheltered from it; in vain he clothes himself in his philosophy, he is obliged to listen to my cruel details, to enter into my anger, to tell me I have reason, in order to prevent me from losing it entirely; in short, he has been on this occasion, as well as on many others, the physician of my soul. He has therefore this excuse, without reckoning that of being a

young lawyer, who wishes to signalise himself by the loss of three or four law-suits, for his best friends who have employed him. Poor M. de Housset is engaged in new actions, as well as my cousin de Bussy. I will give you some information respecting this latter, for if, by chance, he should gain his cause, he would be the richest man in the world, since he would have the adroitness to prove that a marriage which was supposed valid, was merely imaginary, and never took place*.

You give me a very good account of M. de Vardes; but send him back to us, we stand in need of his merit. I do not approve of his having quitted our neighbourhood; he has fixed himself in the heart of the fauxbourg St. Germain, and drags our *friend* along with him. He has deserted all his old friends, and it is true, that he has also left his children; but the balance ought to pre-

* This refers to a scandalous law-suit which the count de Bussy and his daughter, widow of the count de Coligny, lost in the course of the same year. This lady was married in 1681 to a gentleman of Burgundy, of the name of Lariviere; but in order to prevent opposition, and particularly the anger of his father, the marriage was privately solemnised. From some consequent informality in the deeds, Bussy, and even his daughter, influenced by him, took advantage of this circumstance to annul a union, which their pride made them consider as an inferior alliance. There was one child; but by an odious combination, Bussy, and his daughter, who under his auspices lay in secretly at Paris, disowned it, though they both acknowledged what the letters of madame de Coligny proved, that she had lived with Lariviere as with her husband. The attorney-general, Talon, in a very eloquent and learned speech, exclaimed against the strange infatuation of this father and daughter, who *preferred that she should pass for the concubine, rather than the wife, of her husband.* I know not, in reality, how Bussy, with so great a share of understanding, could reconcile his pretended point of honour, with good sense, nature, and virtue. It is singular also, that madame de Sévigné, who appears to have judged properly of this shameful proceeding, should have interfered, with the other relatives, to support the nullity of the marriage. Such are the contradictions that arise from extreme aristocratic institutions and prejudices.

ponderate in our favour. The *red bridge* has begun to avenge us; it is gone to Saint Cloud, not being able to stand the breaking of the ices which have laid it waste. Never was so dreadful a winter known; your country has not been exempt from its severity, and if cardinal de Bonzi found dead men upon the road from Montpellier to Lyons, the courtiers found several upon the road to Versailles; and we citizens have not been able to prevent people from being frozen to death at night in the streets, besides many poor little children: it is thus the hand of Providence often makes itself felt.

I fancy, sir, I must go through all the apartments of the hôtel de Carnavalet, to collect remembrances to you from all. My daughter is well; she does not yet know whether she shall go to Provence, or whether a law-suit she is engaged in, will detain her here. The destiny of mademoiselle d'Alerac appears still uncertain: we believe, however, that the name of Polignac is written in heaven with hers. If mademoiselle de Grignan pleased, she might tell us the truth, for she has a constant intercourse with the celestial country.

The little marquis is a little dawning virtue that does not belie itself: the good abbé is still the *worthy*: the other Grignans are still deserving of your esteem. I have embarked insensibly on this long voyage, but I must not abuse your patience. Adieu, sir. Pray give my compliments to your lady; I shall never forget what she one day related to me here in the purity of her language, and the sprightliness of your climate, nor the answer she made at Versailles.

My almanack seems to predict that I shall go to Britany, but it will not be without previously bidding you adieu more than twice.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI.

More than twice, when once is too much! how abominable! how abandoned! I saw your president Bocard this morning, who did me the honour to call upon me; he tells me he has four children, and all this has renewed the affairs of the country with me: we argued upon the state of Holland as well as of France. But what are you doing, buried in your presidency? return with M. de Vardes. I am still plunged in the law, and I shall cause as many suits to be lost in order to succeed, as a good physician causes lives to be lost, before he saves one. Adieu, my friend, I long to assassinate you at Rambouillet, or to be assassinated by you.

LETTER *DCXCVII.

TO THE SAME.

Paris, June 1, 1684.

I am not in Britany, sir, I am still in Paris, and I shall remain here some time longer. I amuse myself in watching the termination of some business which will influence my daughter's departure. If she goes, I shall follow her close, by taking a contrary direction. If she stays, I shall perform the noble action of leaving her, because a thousand reasons oblige me to go to Britany. What affects our friendship, concerns myself; and our correspondence will not displease you, because I declare that wherever I am, I shall cherish for you a remembrance worthy the jealousy of our *friend*, and that we shall not be more than two months without hearing from each other; we shall thus find means to approximate the two extremities of France. I have showed madame de Villars all you say on the subject of marshal de Belle-

fond. This action has appeared greater to you than to us, from the effect of distance. We give you Luxembourg as a subject of admiration and reflection. This conquest will lose nothing of its value by being placed farther off. The king will return on Saturday, triumphant as usual; M. de Vardes has preceded him; he honours Paris with his presence, and is always the life of conversation. You know we have lost madame de Richelieu, a lady of honour, in the literal sense of the word; she is universally regretted; I know not who will succeed to this noble situation. I shall not amuse myself with relating to you all the changes that have taken place among the bishops: it offends and wounds the heart. Adieu, amiable *reprobate*: write to me occasionally, and address your letters here; they will be very carefully sent to me. Our very dear jealous friend is more worthy than ever of our love; I include also M. de Vardes, who does his duty admirably.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI.

I HAVE waited the conclusion of this letter, to enter upon my evidence, respecting my tranquillity on the subject of your loves. I have read it through, and as I was taking out my spectacles, she asked me if they were a dagger. You see by this, that she wishes to make me uneasy, without being so herself; but you will perhaps both agree with Corbinelli, that the more uneasiness we have, the more we endeavour to conceal it. I confess it, and trust only to my imagination on this point. Perhaps, if it were to be melted in a crucible, more than ten ounces of the disorder of which I thought myself cured, might be extracted. But why wish to be cured of so agreeable a disorder, and one that is caused by two such worthy objects? I have read your letter of the 10th with pleasure; and shall tell you

in reply, that I still owe a grudge to jurisprudence, and that I know enough of it to lose all the law-suits of my friends: which may happen, to my honour, by the ignorance of the courts of justice, where the surest way to lose every thing, is to speak reason, justice, ordinances, and laws. M. de Vardes is here, more delightful than ever, and joining human perfections, and the wisdom of an honest man, to that of a true Christian. Adieu, my friend; jealousy again takes possession of me. I leave you with the assurance, that never was a distracted lover so much attached to his rival.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I HATE this rival, but it is for excelling me, and writing so well in my miserable letter. The conversion of spectacles into a dagger, reminds me of the assassination you wished to make one evening at Rambouillet: it would be happy if we could pass our lives with those who please us, and whose understanding and disposition charm us. I still think of Livri. I shall take care not to lose the hope of seeing you there again some day. And why not? Our good abbé is wonderfully well, and sends you his best compliments. My daughter, her daughters-in-law, and even the coadjutor, rouse themselves at your name, and ask the continuation of a remembrance which is gratifying to them. This is all I had to say to you, sir, soliciting for myself what I solicit for others.

LETTER * DCXCVIII.

FROM MADAME DE GRIGNAN TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

June 13, 1684.

WORD was sent me from Languedoc that I had a law-suit pending there, that M. de Grignan was prosecuted with rigour, and that the judges were strange people. I cursed them heartily, sir, and I have since found that you are one of the principals: it is *you*, therefore, I have loaded with so many imprecations, you, whose protection I have claimed to soften the rigour, and to attend to the justice, of my cause. It is to M. d'Argouges I am indebted for the information, that this odious judge, and this highly-esteemed M. de Moulceau, are one and the same. All the anger kindled against the first, has disappeared at the name of the second, and the weapons have fallen from my hand, like those of Arcabonne, when she recognised Amadis. It is to M. de Moulceau that I address this quotation from the opera; you will suppose, that, in virtue of your title of judge, I shall quote nothing but laws to you. There is one law established in the world, particularly among honest men, which is, never to condemn unheard: in this, sir, consists the favour I have to ask you. The prince de Conti claims an estate of which we have been in possession for three hundred years. I know, from M. de Corbinelli, that three hundred years is a strong title; we request you, sir, to give us time to collect our proofs, to convince you of the weakness of the prince de Conti's claim, and of the solidity of ours. The persons we employ are engaged here in a law-suit which detains me; as soon as they are returned, which will

be in a very short time, they will lay our papers before you, and you will agree, that our only reason for contending with so great a prince, is the necessity we are under to preserve a right that has been most lawfully acquired. It is necessary, sir, to feel that we have justice on our side, not to fear you when the prince de Conti is concerned; and I own, that it is impossible to consider myself more secure than I do, knowing what I know of the business, and knowing you also, as I do, to be the most upright and enlightened judge, and the most estimable and amiable friend, in the world. I ask pardon of your juridical dignity for this little bribe, and protest it is not with a view to corrupt you, but to render due honour to a truth I often think of, but never express to you; I believe, however, that you must sometimes understand me through my mother, and give me credit for the assurances she makes you of my unbounded respect.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

My daughter has expressed herself well, but she has forgotten to tell you, that M. d'Argouges desired her, in my presence, to request you, from him, to give her time: fancy, therefore, that it is the entreaty of M. d'Argouges, but only in case the countess de Grignan should stand in need of this support. I own I was ready to laugh, when I found that the judge to whom he referred us, was no other than the dear friend whom we love and esteem so truly. The duchess d'Arpajon is appointed lady of honour. Madame de Maintenon has filled up this place, a place she had refused to accept. The king said, that madame de Rochefort was too young, and told the dauphiness that madame d'Arpajon was possessed of perfect beauty, an unsullied reputation, that she was mild, courteous, and trust-worthy; that

he knew all this from a person in whom he had as much confidence as in himself. Behold her then, transported with joy, raised above the wind, out of the reach of M. d'Ambres' law-suits, and in a fair way to settle her daughter advantageously. It is thus Providence has determined this important choice, which M. de Louvois wished to fall upon mademoiselle de la Motte; M. de Crequi and the public, upon the duchess de Crequi. The deed is done, and it is the work of madame de Maintenon, who remembered very gratefully the friendship M. de Beuvron and madame d'Arpajon entertained for her, when she was only madame Scarron.

The young duchess de Ventadour is lady of honour to Madame: youth has been no fault here: she is the delight of the Palais Royal: Monsieur speaks of her as if he were honoured by her accepting this place. In fine, our *friend* has managed so well by dint of reasoning, inferring, writing, and philosophising, that M. de Bussy lost his cause yesterday completely. His daughter, obliged to acknowledge both the husband and child, is sentenced to give a hundred francs in alms. This affair will bring our friend into fashion. Bussy flew into the streets; his daughter is almost distracted in her bed. This has been the will of God from all eternity. Amen.

LETTER DCXCIX.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE MARQUIS DE SÉVIGNÉ, HER SON.

Paris, August 5, 1684.

While I am expecting your letters, I must relate to you a very amusing little history. You remember how much you regretted mademoiselle de. ***, and how

unfortunate you thought yourself in having missed her for a wife; "Your best friends had all conspired against your happiness; madame de Lavardin and madame de la Fayette had done you irreparable injury! A young lady of noble birth, great beauty, and ample fortune, was lost to you; surely a man must be doomed never to marry, and to die like a beggar, to let such an opportunity escape him, when it was in his own power! The marquis de *** was not such a fool; he has made his fortune, and is settled. You must certainly have been born under an unlucky planet, to miss such a match! Only observe her conduct; she is a saint; an example to all married women." You remember all this, I suppose, my dear son, and that till you married mademoiselle de Mauron, you were ready to hang yourself; you could not have done better than you have done: but now for the sequel.

All those amiable qualities of her youth, which made madame de la Fayette say, she would not have her for a daughter-in-law if she could bring millions to her son, were happily directed to the service of religion: God was her lover, the only object of her affection, all her desires centred in this single passion; but as every thing was in extremes with her, her poor head could not bear the excess of zeal and fervent devotion with which it was filled; and, to satisfy the overflowings of her Magdalen heart, she resolved to profit by good examples, by reading the lives of the holy fathers of the desert, and of female penitents; she wished to become herself the heroine of such admirable histories; and, full of this idea, left her house and family about a fortnight ago, and, taking with her only five or six pistoles, and a little foot-boy, set out at four o'clock in the morning, and, taking a post-chaise at the skirts of the town, drove to Rouen, fatigued and covered with mud:

when she got there, she bargained for a passage in a ship bound for the Indies: it was there, it seems, God had called her; it was there she was to lead a life of penitence and humiliation: it was there the map had pointed out to her an abode, which invited her to pass the rest of her days in sackcloth and ashes; it was there the abbé Zosimus * was to visit her, and administer to her the last holy rites before she expired. Satisfied with this resolution, and convinced that Heaven inspired her with it, she discharged her foot-boy, and sent him home to his own country, while she waited, with great impatience, the departure of the ship: her good angel consoled her for the delay; she piously forgot husband, daughter, father, and relations, exclaiming,

Ça! courage, mon cœur, point de foiblesse humaine †.

And now the moment arrived in which her prayers are heard; the happy moment that was to separate her for ever from her native land; she follows the law of the gospel; she leaves all to follow Christ.

In the mean time, however, her family missed her, and finding she did not return to dinner, sent to all the churches in the neighbourhood; she was not there: they supposed she would return at night; no tidings were heard of her: they now begin to be uneasy, the servants are all questioned, they can give no account of her, further than that she had taken her foot-boy with her: "she must certainly be at her country-house;" no: "where can she possibly be?" A messenger is dispatched

* A famous hermit of the 6th century, who came on the eve of every Good Friday to give the sacrament to St. Mary the Egyptian, in a desert cave on the banks of the river Jordan.—See the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert.

† Courage, my heart! disdain all human weakness.

to the curé of St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas; the curé says he has not had the direction of her conscience for a considerable time; for, being a simple, honest man, and having observed her full of strange chimerical ideas of religion, he would have nothing to do with her. Every one was now at a loss what to think; two, three, four days, a week passed, still no news of her: at length her friends thought of sending to some of the sea-ports, and, by mere accident, found her at Rouen, on the point of setting out for Dieppe, and from thence to the other extremity of the globe. They secure her, and bring her back, a little disconcerted at being disappointed of her journey;

J'allois, j'étois, l'amour a sur moi tant d'empire*.

A lady to whom she had imparted her design, revealed the whole to her family, who, in despair at her folly, would fain have concealed it from her husband, who happened to be absent from Paris at that time, and who would have been better pleased at an exploit of gallantry in his amiable consort, than such a ridiculous expedition as this. The husband's mother came to madame de Lavardin, and, bathed in tears, related the whole story, while the latter could scarcely refrain from laughing in her face; and the next time she saw my daughter, asked her if she could forgive her for having been the instrument of preventing her brother from marrying this pretty creature. Madame de la Fayette was also, in her turn, informed of this tragical story, and repeated it to me with great glee. She desires me to ask you if you are still angry with her; she maintains that no one can ever repent he did not marry a mad woman.

* I went, I came, impelled by mighty Love.

We dare not mention a syllable of this to mademoiselle de Grignan, her friend, who, for some time past, has been ruminating upon a pilgrimage, and, as a preparative, has lately observed a profound silence towards us all. What think you of this curious narration? has it tired you? are you satisfied now? Adieu, my son. Marshal de Schomberg is marching to Germany at the head of twenty-five thousand men, to hasten the emperor's signing *. The gazette will inform you of the rest. Adieu.

LETTER DCC.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.†

Etampes, Wednesday, September 16, 1684.

You will easily believe, my dearest child, that in spite of all your excellent counsels, I found myself, on quitting you, in the midst of a thousand swords, that wound me whichever way I turn. I dared not think; I dared not speak; my feelings were so painfully alive, that my situation was almost insupportable. I have strictly adhered to the regimen you prescribed me; in short, I do as well as I can; I am in good health, I eat, drink, and sleep, well; I have nursed the *worthy*; in short, I am at Etampes.

I caused the reasons for this journey to be often repeated to me, and found them so cogent, that I was obliged to own its necessity, and to form my resolution: but as the grief of quitting you had, in some degree, effaced them, I still require their aid, in order to bear your

* This relates to the truce which was on the point of being concluded at Ratisbon, and was published at Paris on the 5th of October following.

† Madame de Grignan remained at Paris while her mother was in Britany.

absence with tranquillity; I am still far from this point; I am agitated with an incessant desire of beholding you: do not forget what you said to me on that subject.

I am delighted with the idea of your being at Versailles; the diversity of objects there, must have contributed to calm your mind, more than those of Chartres and Etampes have been able to calm mine. I earnestly hope your journey will prove successful; how can any one refuse you what you ask? I recommend your health to your care; it is a great consolation to me to have left you with such charming round checks; preserve them for my sake. But I dare not dwell upon any subject, every thing destroys me; is it not strange, that a thinking being should not dare to think? I am very much obliged to the lovely eyes of mademoiselle d'Alerac, for the tears* they shed on my account; but what thanks can repay you, my beloved child, for so much affection, and so much grief? Ah! I must pass over this subject as quickly as possible: believe then, in one word, that my heart is devoted to you, that every thing yields place to you therein, and leaves you unrivalled mistress of its affections.

LETTER DCCI.

TO THE SAME.

Amboise, Saturday night, September 16, 1684.

I HAVE had no letter from you yet, my beloved child, though I so ardently long for one. I wrote to you from Etampes and Orleans†: I sent you the excuse of the good abbé du Pile, who was indeed the only agree-

* Frances Julia Adhemar de Grignan, youngest daughter of the count de Grignan, by Angelique-Claire d'Angennes, his former wife.

† This letter was not to be found among the original MSS.

able companion we had; for, as to madame du Pont *, whom I have mentioned to you, and who is possessed of great merit and understanding, my uncle, the abbé, was frightened to death at her. I went, therefore, this morning to pay her a visit; she certainly talks to perfection; I gave her a hint of what prevented me from inviting her to embark with us, which she received very well; and finding there was no such thing as suffering conversation to languish for a moment in her company, I was myself afraid that I should be obliged to furnish my share of wit for thirteen or fourteen successive hours, in my carriage, which is now turned into a boat; and I had much rather have no one to speak to, than be under such restraint.

I found M. de Duras still at Orleans; he is going to his seat at Duras; so the good uncle and I set out all alone, in order to get to St. Dié to sleep, not being able to reach Blois. The wind was rather against us, by which means we got in by the most beautiful moonlight imaginable; but there was no lodging to be obtained, all the apartments being taken up by the duke and his train: his gentleman, however, hearing my name, very civilly made me an offer of his apartment, for which I shall take care that madame de la Fayette shall thank him. This morning we again proceeded on our way, and I stopt at Blois, to inquire if by chance any letters had arrived there from you, but no such thing. We would not pass Amboise in our way hither. We experienced a little poetical storm a hundred paces from the bridge; but we struck against the shore, and paid, in some measure, for the extreme beauty of last evening and this morning. To-morrow we shall go to mass, and then pursue our journey about six leagues beyond Tours, for I am desirous of avoiding the com-

* She was a Bossuet, and first cousin to the bishop of Meaux.

pliments and entertainments that we must expect from Dangeau. With a *worthy* in company, one is not very portable.

Well, my dear child, what say you to this insipid narrative? Do you think it possible for any one to be better acquainted than yourself with what passes on the Loire? It is my fate, however, to have at present nothing but these trifles to entertain you with, and yet I know they please you, while they inform you I am in good health, and not devoured with the vapours; yes, my child, to my shame be it spoken, I live in your absence, instead of being lost in grief at having left you in a place where it was so natural for me to have remained with you: this thought oppresses my heart, and it was a complete struggle with me to enter, as I did, into the reasons which influenced my departure; I scarcely know how it happened.

Do you not intend to go to Livri? Pray do, and think of me there, but with that firmness and philosophy which govern all your thoughts and actions; alas! I have not so much command over myself, and nothing can prevent me from wishing to see you, to be with you always, and to be sensibly affected with our affection for each other. I seem to be losing time that ought to be precious to me; I have been cheated out of it, but I own the state of my own affairs makes me very uneasy. Oh my child! how much I shall stand in need of you, to keep up my spirits, and give me courage!

My principal occupation on my journey is to admire this beautiful river. I have read the life of madame de Montmorenci, and think it worth the perusal. Adieu, my dear countess; I wish to make my letters short, and I cannot. You see what trifles this is filled with. Send a kind remembrance to M. and madame de Coulanges, and compliments to the hôtel de Chaulnes, if any of

the family is there. Has my little marquis forgotten me? How are you with the coadjutor, the chevalier, and mademoiselle de Grignan? Indeed, you have much to tell me, particularly of yourself, your health, and your journey to Versailles. I hope at least to hear from you at Angers.

LETTER DCCII.

TO THE SAME.

Saumur, Monday evening, September 16, 1684.

We have had a contrary wind, my dear child, ever since I left you. We only get on by means of our oars; this has detained me a day longer than I expected, so that we shall not get to Angers till to-morrow, which just completes the week since our departure. From that good town you may expect to hear from me. I intend to see my niece de Busy to-morrow: she has been looking for me ever since I set out.

I have had no other amusement on my passage, but contemplating the beauties of the country around us. The *worthy* and I have been for fourteen or fifteen hours together in my carriage, which is more commodiously placed in the boat than the last time. Our dinner is an important event, and is expected by us with impatience: it is served hot; M. de Coulanges' earthenware is scarcely superior to ours. I have read sometimes, but have always been obstructed, and have counted the waves, instead of attending to my history; but I shall recover of this, when it pleases God.

Reflect, my dear countess, that I have written to you constantly; that I have teased you, from confidence in your affection, with the dull account of a still duller journey; and that I have been a whole week

without having received a single line from you. Our whole journey has been disconcerted by the obstinacy of the wind, so that you will readily believe I shall be delighted to get to Angers to-morrow, where I expect to find letters from you. Neither will you doubt, that, having been obliged to have my thoughts constantly occupied with you, I must have called to mind the thousand reasons I have to love you, and to be convinced of your affection. This has increased and renewed mine: Providence has thus ordained it: all society has failed us: much might be said of the pleasure or restraint that would have been the consequence of much company. Our *worthy*, however, seems satisfied; he is in perfect health, and so am I: we both embrace you.

LETTER DCCIII.

TO THE SAME.

Angers, Wednesday, September 20, 1684.

I ARRIVED yesterday afternoon at five o'clock at the bridge of Cé, after having been to church in the morning, and paid a visit to my niece de Bussy. At Saumur I found a coach and six at the foot of this bridge, which I took to be my son's, and so it proved; but instead of him, I found the abbé Charier, who came to receive me, because Sévigné is a little indisposed at the Rocks. I am far from disliking this abbé; he has a slight tincture of the Grignan about him, on his father's side, and from having seen you; what made him infinitely more acceptable to me than any other person in the world, who could have come to meet me, was, his putting into my hands a letter from you. His presence was not the least restraint to me, and I gave way to a flood of tears, so bitter, that they would inevitably

have choked me, had I been obliged to repress my feelings. Ah! how well-judged a preparative was this! You seem quite dissatisfied with your Versailles journey; you found, you say, many doors shut; I think you were right to send your letter.

It is said here, that the court does not set out so soon as was intended. Perhaps you may have an opportunity of seeing M. de Louvois once more. God will direct every thing for the best. You know too well how much I interest myself in all that concerns you, to neglect informing me of the rest, as speedily as possible.

I have just opened your letter to your brother. How affectionately do you express yourself respecting me! What charges do you not give him on my account! How shall I be able to requite so much tenderness and concern? I readily agree that you should make a merit with him of my quitting you; but heaven knows the true cause of it, what it cost me, and that nothing but the dreadful situation of my affairs could have determined me to tear myself from you. There is a certain time of life, when honour and conscience require us to use our best endeavours to recruit our shattered forces, and not to drive things to extremity. This is the real state of the case with me; this it is that made the good *worthy* venture upon a journey at this time of the year, which cannot but be very fatiguing to him.

Yesterday I paid a visit to the pious bishop of Angers (H. Arnauld), where I saw his brother the abbé Arnauld, still the firm friend of our family, and highly pleased with our civil letter. They both returned my visit the same evening; and who should arrive the next minute, but madame de Vesins, madame de Varennes, and madame d'Assé! You will see the latter very soon. Adieu, my dear countess! I am going to dine with the good bishop.

Angers, Thursday, September 21.

I am just going to set out, my dear child, for the Rocks, and cannot leave this place without a word or two, by way of bidding you adieu. I dined to-day, as I told you, with the good bishop, whose exemplary piety, and attention to the duties of his profession, are almost inconceivable. He is now upon the verge of ninety, and yet he endures fatigue that no man could support, who was not, like himself, full of love of God and his fellow-creatures*. I have had a whole hour's private chat with him, and find in his conversation all the intelligence of his brothers. He is a prodigy, and I am overjoyed at having had an opportunity of beholding him with my own eyes. I spent the greatest part of the afternoon of yesterday at Roncerai and the Visitation. These good ladies, de Vesins, d'Assé, and Varennes, never quitted me an instant. They gave me a grand collation, and here they come to take leave of me, together with the good prelate, and his brother, the abbé. We are not so polite as this at Paris. I hope, my love, I shall find a letter from you at the Rocks.

LETTER DCCIV.

FROM MONSIEUR DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, September 24, 1684.

I JUDGE, my dear sister, of your concern, by the joy I now feel, in having my mother and the *worthy* with me, who, notwithstanding the fatigue of their journey, are

* He lived many years longer. It was said of him, at a time when several bishops had retrenched many of the holidays and saints'-days which he strictly observed, that instead of taking away any, he would add one to the number of their festivals.

both in excellent health. I can easily conceive how grieved you must be at their absence: but if you should be under any anxiety respecting my mother's health, you may, at least, rest assured, that nothing that affectionate solicitude can do, shall be wanting on my part, to preserve a health so precious to us both. I pardon you, for envying my present happiness; but it was no more than justice, that our dear mother should make us equal sharers in the pleasure which her presence always bestows: do not hate me, therefore, my lovely little sister, on this account, but let my example teach you to love your rivals. This is a disposition madame de Coulanges always acknowledged me to have, and which I have always felt in my heart towards you.

This morning my uncle put into my hands the pretty present sent me from my princess*. He and I, and the abbé Charier, have been employed half an hour in endeavouring to open this little bottle, and at length we have so far succeeded as to move the cork, though not without a hard trial of skill; but as we relieve each other alternately, it at last turns easily. My mother has shown us another way of using it, which is very convenient, for the Hungary water now comes out of itself, without the trouble of opening the bottle.

Farewel, my lovely and beloved little sister: a thousand thanks to my adorable princess; pray tell her, I am tired of waiting for her to be a viscountess†, and that I shall be perfectly happy to hear of the meta-

* Mademoiselle d'Alerac.

† Alluding to a marriage which was then on foot, between mademoiselle d'Alerac, and Gaspard vicomte de Polignac; but this match being afterwards broken off, M. de Polignac married Marie Armande de Rambures in 1688; and mademoiselle d'Alerac, in 1689, espoused Henry-Emanuel Arnault, marquis de Vibraie.

morphosis. I offer up my most devout prayers to *Saint Grignan**, and embrace you from the bottom of my heart.

LETTER DCCV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, September 27, 1684.

At length, my dear child, I have three of your letters at once. I cannot but admire how fortunately this happens, at a time when I have no other consolation; it is life, business, occupation, food; without it I am weak, unsupported, and annoyed by the letters of every other person: in short, I feel the want of intercourse with one so dear to me. All you say is so kind and affectionate, that I should never forgive myself, if I could read your letters without tears, any more than if I could live this winter without your society. But let us talk a little of Versailles. I augur well of this silence; I cannot believe so just a demand can be refused you in these liberal times; you know all your friends desired you to try the experiment; how great then will be your pleasure, if, by your attention and solicitations, you should at length obtain this little favour! It could never come at a better time, for I believe, and this is an addition to my other anxieties, that your affairs are in a sad plight. For my part, I am convinced I could never have retrieved mine, had I waited six months longer. When once things have proceeded to a certain extremity, they become irreparable. You were one of the first to agree with me in this opinion; this is a comfort to me, whenever I think of the subject.

* See Letter of 25th September.

We lead a very dull life here, and yet I do not think I should be pleased with more bustle. My son has been troubled with boils. My daughter-in-law has very few moments of gaiety, for she is eaten up with the vapours; she changes her face twenty times a day, without being able to please herself; she is extremely delicate, and scarcely ever stirs out of doors; she is always complaining of the cold; by nine o'clock at night her spirits are exhausted; the days are too long for her, and the great desire she has to indulge her inclination for indolence, makes her leave me quite at liberty, that I may do the same by her, with which I assure you I am very much pleased. I appear perfectly mistress of the house, though I never meddle in any of the affairs; but am served and waited on, as it were, by enchantment. I take my walks alone, but I dare not trust myself in the dusk, for fear of bursting into tears and lamentations; darkness, therefore, is very bad for me in my present situation; if my mind can fortify itself, I will sacrifice this melancholy amusement, for fear of offending you; at present it is for the sake of my health, which you recommend so earnestly to my care, that I relinquish it; in short, it is you who direct all. It is not my fault, my child, that all the world does not know the tender and solid affection you bear me. I should be an ungrateful creature could I doubt it; and if madame de Montchevreuil thought that the concern I feel is greater than yours, it can only be because few daughters love a mother as you love me. Why did you wound your dear heart by visiting my desolate chamber? could have induced you to enter that desert country? It is there you would miss me most.

You have gratified me by talking of Versailles. The place madame de Maintenon holds is unrivalled; it has not, nor ever will have, its equal in the world. You

certainly cannot have neglected to refresh her memory a little, by means of madame de Montchevreuil. I do not want any assistance in procuring M. de Coulanges' chair; let me alone, I coin money here. I am glad our marriage is not likely to be further delayed, and that the coadjutor and you are still fixed upon my cheeks: by the bye, pray take care of yours, my dear; preserve your health; do not over-fatigue yourself; take pity on me, for, believe me, I could with great difficulty endure greater uneasiness than at present falls to my lot.

The death of madame de Cœuvres was a very strange event, and that of the chevalier d'Humieres still more so. Alas, how Death traverses the world, seizing every one he meets with! I am at present in good health, and am cautious how I attempt to make myself better by medicines. We expect the capuchins every minute. The poor little woman here is really to be pitied: it is a dull house; there is nothing in it that gives me much joy, nor any thing that occasions me much uneasiness. Well, so much the better; this is just what I wish: they both send you a thousand remembrances.

Corbinelli is enchanted with your kindness: I really envy him: this is worth all my friendship for him. The *worthy*, who desires me to say many affectionate things to you in his name, still goes on with his calculations, and still preserves his health. Adieu, my beloved child; what can I say that can in any way express what I feel for you? I thank you for the newsver have you think of every thing, and are in every thing adorable. You talk of my letters; I wish you would remark the strokes that are in your own, and how much you say in a single line: you lose a great deal by not keeping copies of them to read at your leisure. Let me trouble you with compliments to M. de Cœuvres,

and madame de Mouci, on her heroic adventure, which makes us fear for her health. You must not fail to write a handsome letter to M. de Lamoignon in your name and mine, on the concern he must have felt at seeing his friend expire in his arms.

LETTER DCCVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 1, 1684.

Though my letter is dated Sunday, I write it on Saturday night. It is now ten o'clock, every one is retired to rest; and this is an hour in which I am more particularly yours, than when surrounded by company; not that I am under any restraint on that account, for I know how to escape from it; I indulge myself in a solitary walk; and, say what you please, my dear child, if it were not for that liberty, I should be indeed greatly confined. I feel it as necessary to think of you attentively, as I do to see you again; and if the swords I mentioned to you in a former letter from Etampes were a little less piercing, the time which I thus devote to you should be dedicated to my health, as it now is to the relief of my heart. I told you a melancholy truth, that you left me in a situation where every thought was like a sword's point. I know not how to defend myself, for we are defenceless indeed when our own thoughts prove daggers to our repose. But let us drop this melancholy theme, my child; I now write to you in security and peace: but though I am, by this means, present with you, I still feel painfully our separation. It is now a week since I came here, and there is so much time gone. The abbé Charier is the only person with whom I can talk of you; he kindly listens to me,

while I tell him how much I love you. I know not whom I shall have to supply his place when he is gone. He enters into all my feelings, is full of admiration at yours, and cannot conceive how it happens, that you are not comforted for this separation, by the gaieties which surround you at Versailles.

You regret me, you say, as a sick man regrets the loss of health; but I cannot agree with you, for you felt greater pleasure in my five or six visits a day, and in the charms of our intercourse, than is felt from the enjoyment of the best health; you have not done justice to the strength of your affection. For my part, my dear child, I must confess that I have nothing to reproach myself with; not a moment passed without my being fully sensible of the joy of being in your company. Whenever I came from church, whenever I came from town, whenever I came from the *worthy's*, all was happiness, all was pleasure. In short, I declare to you in the sincerity of my heart, that all the time I passed with you, diminished not in the slightest degree the warmth of my sentiments. This is the real truth. Do you not wonder whither my pen has hurried me? I am alone, my child; my heart is overflowing with affection; this effusion will probably find you in a different disposition; but no matter, my dear countess, you will bear with my weakness. Is it possible that I can have written so much without having yet said a word of mademoiselle de Grignan? I am more concerned than surprised at her flight*. She always considered us as a great burthen; nothing we could say would please her: she has fairly got rid, however, of father

* Mademoiselle de Grignan had thrown herself into a convent of the Bernardines at Gif, without communicating her intention to any of her family.

Moret's * yoke. But not to say a word of her intention to the coadjutor! that is very strange; has she taken Cocole with her? what is become of Champagne †? who attended her?

I am very much afraid our marriage will be broken off, by the interested motives you have mentioned to me. It shall not be by my consent, however, and if every thing must be sacrificed to the prospect of a ducal coronet, which may never arrive, mademoiselle d'Alerac is likely to become the dupe or the victim of this management. I heartily wish the coadjutor good health for several reasons; this holds the second rank. What is become of the little birds that took their flight to Pui? I shall expect to hear from you the result of all this.

Indeed, my dear child, I pity you, in having your house to rebuild; what an unseasonable expence! You are loaded with vexations that seem made for no one else; but perhaps I feel them more sensibly than you do. If it pleased Providence to relieve you, by giving good inclinations to him from whom you have requested assistance, it might be easily done. I am sorry to hear the grand-master ‡ has broken one of his ribs: his hunting match has proved as fatal to him, as the church-going of the poor marchioness de Cœuvres proved to her.

There are several parts of your letter I should wish to be sent to Fontevrauld, if they were accompanied with encomiums upon the abbé Têtu. It is really foolish to say so much of my letters; I cannot think what you mean. It is true, indeed, that while I was in the boat, not being able to procure any other books, I amused

* A famous father of the Oratory.

† Two of mademoiselle de Grignan's servants.

‡ The duke de Lude.

myself with the funeral oration, which I thought very well adapted, and was of opinion that the preacher could not have said any thing better of madame de Richelieu *, for M. de Turenne was out of the question. I wrote my opinion of it in a line or two to madame de la Fayette; and the abbé Têtu, whose vanity will never let him be blind to his own advantage, has *turned the affair* † to Fontevrauld; but in future, my dear, you have nothing to do but to speak, and silence me. I should not be at all surprised at it, if it were to your understanding I addressed myself; but it is to your affection, which answers me much better.

You conclude your letter by a phrase as beautiful as it is uncommon: "I am like health to you;" in other words, "the pleasure of pleasures." After such thoughts never talk of my trifles! I know myself well, and am not so easily led astray.

Here I left off last night: to-day is Sunday, and I must dispatch my packet; but the return of day-light, and of noise, has not impaired the sentiments which I experienced in the stillness of night. My son is just set out for Rennes, in order to ascertain whether his boils are of serious consequence. His wife is in the house with me, and is not offended at my wishing to pass the day alone. I spent the morning in the woods with my abbé Charier. I find she is going there presently, so I return to my chamber and my pen. This I assure you is very pleasant. She has a great many good qualities, at least I believe so; but these being as yet the first days of our acquaintance, I find myself disposed only to give her a negative commendation; she is *not* this, she is *not* that; in time, perhaps, I may say she *is* that. She sends you a great many pretty compliments, and

* Who died May 28, 1684.

† A favourite expression of M. de la Garde's.

wishes to be in our good graces, but without showing much anxiety on the subject; so that she is *not anxious*. This is all I can make out at present; she has no provincial dialect nor accent.

I very much approve of putting nothing round my cypher, but the words, *madame de Sévigné*, that is sufficient; I shall not be confounded with another of the same name, I believe, so long as I live; and I shall be very glad of this little amusement*. M. de Coulanges has already taken care of the gilding of the frame, so that the expence will be very trifling, and I shall not want your assistance.

Good heavens, my dear child, what delightful weather it is! and how I pity you for not being at Livri, since I have given you my taste for the country! you know, however, that it never equalled the pleasure of being with you. My greatest passion for Livri lasted but two days, if you were not there. But God has disposed of my fate, and in a few days I shall have more of a country life than I would choose.

I place to my own account all your goodness to Corbinelli. He is an excellent companion, as well as madame de la Fayette. Keep closely to them, and judge whether I have lost my taste. I have not yet seen either the princess or Marbeuf. The former is absorbed in devotion, and the latter in grief at the death of a young niece of seventeen years of age, handsome, rich, and of a good family. I saw her the last time I was in the country, when she was quite a child. It seems she was become very agreeable, and used frequently to visit here and at Vitré. She was seized with hysterics, and died in three days, notwithstanding she was bled

* Madame de Sévigné was working a chair in tapestry, as a present for M. de Coulanges.

every day in the arm. This catastrophe is not unlike madame de Cœuvres'. Adieu, my best beloved. Give a kiss for me to the young rhetorician*, whom I defy, with all his rhetoric, to convince me that I do not love him dearly.

LETTER DCCVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, October 4, 1684.

I WAS sure it would not be long before you went to Gif; it was a very natural step: and I expect from you a full account of this journey, and the result of the retreat, as also of our marriage, and of the obstinacy of M. de Montausier, who insists on making such unheard of demands. In short, whatever passes in the hotel de Carnavalet, is more or less interesting to me, according to the share you have in it. You express yourself with so much affection on the concern my absence gives you, that though the knowledge of your sufferings must always painfully affect me, I had rather bear this sorrow than be without such a convincing proof of your love. My melancholy is not removed by variety of objects; I subsist upon my own stock, and the quiet of this little family does not diminish it. My son considers himself obliged to me, for banishing from his house a number of unpleasant visitors, with whom he was overwhelmed. I am delighted at this, for you know I am not very complaisant to impertinence, and I do not possess your happy art of abstraction: I lose my patience, and say very rude things. Heaven be praised, we are now at liberty, and I have leisure to pursue my

* The marquis de Grignan, her grandson.

reading. I am going to begin a book madame de Vins has recommended to my perusal : it is *A History of the Reformation in England**. I write letters, and receive them, and am almost every day occupied with yours. I receive your letters on Monday, I answer them on Wednesday, as I do those which may arrive on Friday, the Sunday following ; so that I do not feel the interval between the post-days. I walk a great deal, not only on account of the fineness of the weather, but because I anticipate the horrors of the approaching winter, and am therefore willing to make the most of the present sunshine that heaven favours me with. Do you not intend to spend a few days at Livri, my dear? I should think the chevalier would be glad to rest himself there a little, after having taken the waters ; and as the coadjutor is perfectly cured, every thing seems to invite you to take that jaunt. If you should be in want of slight mourning, I can supply you. M. de Montmoron† died about four days ago, at his own house, of a fit of apoplexy : there is thus one added to the number of saints ; however, we must not presume to judge.

I have seen the princess, who enters into my feelings; she expresses great affection both for you and for me; every day she drinks fourteen or fifteen large dishes of tea : she prepares it as we do ; first letting the leaves infuse, and then filling the cup half-full of boiling water : she says it has been the panacea of all her disorders ; and she very gravely assured me, that the landgrave ‡, her nephew, drank forty dishes every morning.

* This must be the original history, by Burnet ; for according to the *Dictionnaire Historique*, Rosemond's translation did not appear till three years later. It is known to be a solid and instructive work, except that it is slightly tinctured with partiality, and particularly favours Henry VIII.

† He was of the Sévigné family. ‡ Of Hesse-Cassel.

"Thirty, perhaps, madam!" said I. "Oh no! I assure you he drank forty, and was raised by it from the grave." And all this I have been obliged to swallow. I told her, that I was very glad to find Europe in good health, by her being out of mourning. She said I judged very rightly, but that she was apprehensive she should be obliged to change her dress soon for her sister the electress*. I am now perfectly acquainted with all the family affairs in Germany: in spite of her oddities, it must be confessed she is a good creature.

I enclose you a letter for M. de Pomponne; I am rejoiced he has got this abbey. In what a handsome manner it was given; when he was in Normandy, never dreaming of such a thing! *Non ti l'invidio, non, mi piango il mio* †; in other words, Art thou the only one who can obtain the least favour? Do you not think your affairs hold the chief place in my heart? I am certain I think of them with more concern than you do; but make the most of the courage which enables you to bear every frown of fortune, and, if you would make me happy, continue to love me: for, bitter as are the sorrows of affection, they are exquisitely gratifying.

* Charlotte of Hesse-Cassel, wife to Charles-Lewis count palatine of the Rhine, and elector of the empire.

† I do not envy thy fate, but I lament my own.

LETTER DCCVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, October 8, 1684.

Alas, my dear child, you have been ill! A sore throat is a very painful disorder; it approaches very near to a quinsey. You mention this with an air of raillery, to prevent my being alarmed; but the heat of your blood, which has occasioned you so many sufferings, will not allow me to laugh, especially when it attacks you thus. The journey to Gif must have been very fatiguing to you; do you remember your trip to Lambesc with madame de Monaco? I do not believe, indeed, you have been dangerously ill; but then the air, the fogs of the valleys of Saint Bernard, the gloom of that retreat, the tears you have shed, the fatigues you have undergone, and the loss of rest, have had such an effect on you, that you have been obliged to be bled twice in two days. Compose yourself, my child; keep yourself quiet, be careful of yourself, and do not amuse yourself in writing volumes, nor in answering the endless scrolls I write to you at my leisure; if you do, I may perhaps, in future, confine myself to a single page.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE GRIGNAN.

How much I am obliged to you, sir, for taking the pen out of my daughter's hand! Notwithstanding her wicked jests, I entreat you to prevent her from writing for a few days, and to be kind enough to save her the trouble by becoming her amanuensis to me. Among

other things, pray inform me of every particular relating to the young saint; what could occasion such impatience in her; what M. de Montausier and mademoiselle d'Alerac say of it, and what effect her retirement will have upon our marriage: you will oblige me greatly by chatting with me a little upon these subjects. But, above all things, I recommend to you the care of my daughter's health; trust her not, when she is for sitting up late at night, and rising early in a morning, and swallowing oceans of tea and coffee. I assure you, sir, such a mode of life is very injurious to one whose blood is so apt to be inflamed as hers is. Recollect the situation in which we saw her some time ago, and do not suffer her to abuse the return of her health and beauty. She is subject to a pain in her side, which often gives me great uneasiness; for I cannot be persuaded that such pains arise without a cause. Remind her of the periwinkle, to which she ought to show some regard, if it is only out of gratitude. Take her to Livri, to rest herself a little; and let me have the satisfaction of knowing, that, by being constantly with her, you are the superior power, that will prevent her from doing ill.

TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

This may be a little tiresome to you, my dear; but I shall say to you, if you complain, "Who speaks to you*?" Take care of yourself, if it be only for my sake; for your absence, and your ill health, would be too much for me to bear at once. I am sure I shall not find those cheeks so blooming as when I left them; nothing alters a person so quickly as these painful disorders, and two such copious bleedings; I can talk to

* See Letter June 9, 1680.

you on no other subject. I am very anxious to hear of you; but if you do not employ the chevalier as your amanuensis, for some time, I will not write to you.

I expect my son back from Rennes to-day; in his absence, I have conversed with his wife: she appears to be a very rational being; she enters into our past affairs like one of us, and better than all Britany put together. It is no small matter, in my opinion, not to find a pitiful or perverse mind, but one disposed to see things in their proper light.

Indeed, my child, I cannot comply with your wish of being always in company: it is absolutely necessary for me to devote certain hours to you; and the liberty of doing so, though melancholy, is pleasing. I must confess, however, that, in whatever way I employ myself, the days appear of their usual length here, and even longer. As for the month of September, I really thought it had lasted half a year; and I cannot reconcile it to my imagination, that I have been at this place only a fortnight.

LETTER DCCIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, November 5, 1684.

Yes, my child, I promise that I will not terrify myself with apprehensions on account of your disorder; I conjure you, therefore, not to conceal from me the true state of your health; but surely that third bleeding was too much after the two former; and your medicines must have been ill-chosen, for our capuchins are enemies to purgative salts. I cannot help thinking you have been improperly treated; I thought Alliot had been your physician, but I find there are more than one

eager for the privilege; and M. de Coulanges writes me word, that it was Céron who had that honour; he, it seems, has been sent for, post, to visit madame de Chaulnes, who is at death's door, and it was he who ordered you those three bleedings, your disorder being very pressing and violent. It rests with you to tell me the real truth, for I am quite at a loss what to think of the different accounts I have read; according to you, the pain of your throat was trifling, and the danger over when they applied the remedy. However it may be, my child, make yourself easy, and get well as soon as possible; for this purpose, continue your periwinkle-tea, which, bitter as it is, is the true specific for your complaints; and if you should find writing painful to you, get M. du Plessis to write for you, but add a line yourself at the top and bottom, for I must see your handwriting in some part, or it is all over with me; but it will give me, on the contrary, great pleasure to reflect, that, stretched at your ease upon your couch, you chat with me, without confining yourself for two hours to a posture that must be very injurious to you. As for our health, I will tell you very sincerely how we all are: in the first place, I am perfectly well; I walk abroad when the weather is fine; I avoid both fogs and night airs; and my son, who keeps a watchful eye over me, brings me in upon the least appearance of either. My daughter-in-law never stirs out; she is using the capuchin's remedies, that is, a course of herb tea, and herb bathing, which has greatly fatigued her, without her having derived any benefit from them yet; so that we are neither in a condition or inclination to take very long walks. At Livri, indeed, we are sometimes tempted to do it, for in the heat of summer it is very agreeable to take a few turns by moonlight, but here we do not

think of it; we embrace, however, every gleam of sunshine.

The good abbé is still troubled with his flatulences, but he is accustomed to them; the capuchins make him take a little powder of crab's eyes every morning, which they assure him will do wonders; but it is very slow in its operation, and he still continues to suffer. As for me, I am quite free from my vapours. I believe they only came, because I made much of them; and as they have found of late that I despise them, they have taken their leave of me to go and frighten some other fools. This is the true state in which we are at present. Your description of mademoiselle d'Alerac's is inimitable: it is a glass of Champaign, which enlivens the soul. You must not be astonished if she now displays one herself: she sometimes appears so unmoved, that it is difficult to guess whether she has a soul or not. M. de Polignac must have two; one for his love, and another for his gratitude. I think the articles will be settled better at Livri than at M. de Montausier's; there the difficulties will be removed; but I cannot comprehend M. de Polignac's first appearance: what could his solemn air, and short ceremonious visit, mean? Ought it to have been so cold? Ought he not to have explained his long absence and long silence, with grace and ardour? And how, after such a beginning, could he acquit himself so handsomely, as you say he did? But, indeed, you have painted the whole scene admirably; for which I return you many thanks, as you know how much I interest myself in this affair.

The good abbé is likewise very much obliged to M. du Plessis, for the honour he has done his canal, whose reputation has been not a little heightened by the accident you mentioned: it may be compared to a sudden

and vigorous execution of justice, after it has lain for some time dormant; every one sees, trembles, and believes; after this little shipwreck, drought, mud, and frogs, may do their worst; we shall always be able to boast a canal in which M. du Plessis had like to have been drowned.

We have had a fortnight, or more, of very dreary weather, but there is no judging of the season in this country; it has probably been warm and fine at Fontainbleau, while we have been buried in damps and fogs; however, we must take these things as they come, for we cannot have the direction of them. I am sorry the chevalier's rheumatism has attacked him so early. Vichi has not done him any great service this year; I wish our capuchins may have better success.

I suppose you are at Paris, and that it will not be long before you are at Fontainbleau. But, my dear, do you intend to take the journey in one day? consider your health, let that be the prevailing object; for, indeed, my health and life are wrapped up in yours. What do you think I have obtained by the death of madame de Luynes*? The heart-ache, and a thousand melancholy reflections, which there is no warding off. What must we do, not to die? Young, handsome, rich, and happy, she almost paid the tribute of nature last year, by an illness which brought her to death's door; and in less than another year, she dies in reality! This is a subject for infinite reflection! M. de Chaulnes is very much afflicted at the event; write to him: madame de Chaulnes has been extremely ill; they have so much friendship for me, that you ought not to neg-

* Anne de Rohan; she died 29 October, in the 25th year of her age.

lect them. Adieu, my beloved child; madame de la Fayette informs me that madame de Coulanges is charmed with your wit and person.

LETTER DCCX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 15, 1684.

I HAVE received a letter from marshal d'Estrade, in which he relates so ingenuously and kindly all the questions you ask him concerning me, and I perceive so clearly the interest your affection prompts you to take in the life I lead here, that I confess I cannot read his letter without tears: I ask your pardon for this weakness, it is passed; but, indeed, I was not prepared for this simple and unaffected recital, and it took me by surprise. This, my child, is the most remarkable occurrence that has befallen me since I wrote to you last; but how can I conceal from you so tender, so convincing, so natural, and so true a proof of regard? Besides, it seems that you are like me, my child, and that we place all that relates to each other in the first rank, the rest merely fills up the space. You ask, why am I not with you? Alas! I could easily answer you, if I were inclined to debase my letter with a detail of the reasons that obliged me to quit you, of the misery of this country, the sums that are owing me here, the delays in the payment of them, what I owe elsewhere, and the ruin my affairs must have sustained had I not taken this resolution in time. You well know that I put it off for two years with pleasure; but there are extremes, my dear child, in which we should destroy every thing, by attempting to wrestle with necessity; the property I possess is no longer my own; I must

preserve the same honour and the same probity I have all my life professed. This, this, my child, is the cruel 'cause that tears me from you; and is this a subject to entertain you with? But I have the pleasing hope of seeing you soon again; in the mean time, I am here with my son, who is very happy in seeing me eat a part of what he owes me: this reflection makes me sleep soundly, and enables me better to bear the loss of all his farmers owe me, from whom, I dare say, I shall obtain nothing. I am persuaded you feel all the force of these facts, which, however, will soon be at an end, and I shall be then restored to my former situation: I could not, however, forbear telling you all this in the bitterness of my heart, because I find some relief in talking with a beloved child, whose affection is not to be equalled.

I hardly think it worth while to speak of my health, which is every thing I could wish; and I love M. de Coulanges for having showed you my letter, as it will have cured you of your fancies; for the style we adopt in writing to him resembles joy and health. What my son wrote you respecting the capuchins, was to put you upon your guard, in case of any sudden alarm; but this alarm is yet at a distance, and in the hands of Providence, for hitherto our frail machines have been but little disordered: yours, my dear child, has not been so well regulated, for you have had a severe fit of illness.

The weather still continues terrible; the post can hardly pass, so that we must no longer think of receiving our packets regularly. I had very little to say of the journey to Fouesnel; it was as dreary as possible: I just mentioned it to Coulanges. I find your regard for his wife still goes on well; this is as it should be: her husband writes charming letters. It seems he has informed you of the story of the fair *Cuverdan*; but we

know not whether it is truth or fiction; for he says she was the daughter of *Cafut*, which *Cafut* was a folly with which he was so taken when a child, as to get a sound whipping for it, his parents being apprehensive that it would turn his head with madame de Sanzei: be that as it may, the *Cuverdan* of this county comes here to-morrow; she has been these three days on a visit to the princess.

Recollect Corbinelli's rule, my child, that we should never judge without having first heard both sides of the question. There are many things to be said *pro* and *con*; but in short matters were so situated, that it was necessary to break for ever with madame de Tissé, and abandon the only connexion my son has with M. de Mauron *, or to break abruptly with the princess: he held out as long as he could, to avoid being guilty of rudeness; but at length he was obliged to decide, and he preferred the satisfaction of being upon a good footing with his new relations, and the calls of gratitude and interest, to the honour of having followed the prejudices of the princess, whose head, like those of all other Germans, is full of them. You will say it was very ridiculous of madame de Tissé to exact such a declaration from her nephew, that she does not know the world, and that her conduct is to be lamented; all this is very true, but there was no altering her. Good heavens, my dear countess, how much more I have said upon this subject than I intended to say!

But let us now talk of M. de la Trousse, who is taking immense strides in the road of fortune. Do you know the qualities of a simple machine called a lever? I think I have been one to him; but you will perhaps call me vain in saying so. This makes me interest myself par-

* Father-in-law of M. de Sévigné, and brother of madame de Tissé.

ticularly in the future events of a life, which has hitherto been distinguished for a great deal of honour, a great deal of happiness, and a great deal of favour. I shall not fail to write to him; in the mean time make my compliments on this subject to mademoiselle de Méri. Pray do not forget it.

I have nothing farther to say of the indifference of madame de Coulanges, except that I think she has taken the best and most proper method. You judge well of the success that is likely to attend madame de la Fayette's intercession. Never did any one perform so many good offices without stirring a step. She has great merit, and is held in high esteem; these you share in common with her, but not her success; yet I much question whether all the expense and services of M. de Grignan will do more than you. It is not without great concern that I see you both so unfortunate. You will do well to go to Versailles when the court is there: but, my dear child, I cannot too often caution you to take care of the floods; for strange stories are told here of the damage occasioned by the late inundations.

You certainly speak the truth when you assure me the affection you have for me does you harm; and it will be but doing me justice to think, that I feel the same, and to a greater extent than I should wish to do; for, I acknowledge, that when we love to a certain degree, we fear every thing, forebode every thing, and figure to ourselves whatever is possible to happen, though it is most likely never to happen at all. Sometimes the distance between the posts appears insupportable to me, and when at last I receive a letter from you, I open it with fear and trembling; there is no denying that all this does one harm: therefore, my dear, let it

be our mutual study to spare ourselves these anxieties as much as possible.

It is now a fortnight since we have seen any of our walks or gardens, the weather has been so deplorable; I am no longer in the humour for walking, and I keep close to my apartment, where I amuse myself very well with working Coulanges' chair. I had not been informed of the marriage of mademoiselle de Courtin, nor do I care much about it. I have received a very kind remembrance from M. de Lamoignon; he regrets my absence, and says he is very much vexed that he did not show me the speech he made last year, before the assembly of the states. I have desired him to show it to you, as a person, in one respect more worthy of it than myself. Say something to him about it; he will be pleased with your notice.

Madame de Marbeuf is arrived; she is really a good creature; but do not believe, my dear child, that I could not very well dispense with her company. Liberty is to me preferable to any society: I shall bring her to my terms; I must have a few hours to myself; she sends you a thousand compliments; answer them by a line or two in your next, and more of *Cuverdan*.

LETTER DCCXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 26, 1684.

So much the worse for you, my dear child; if you do not read over your letters, your indolence robs you of a great pleasure, which is not one of the least of the evils it may occasion you; for my part, I read them over and over again; they constitute all my joy, all my sorrow, all my occupation, so that you are

the centre and cause of all. I shall begin this letter with you.

Is it possible that what you tell me can be true, that when you spoke to the king you were like a person beside yourself, and so lost, to use your own expression, in the blaze of majesty, that you knew not what you said, nor could recollect any of your ideas? Never, never, can I believe that my beloved daughter, always so remarkable for her ready wit, and happy presence of mind, should have been in such a situation. I must confess, that from what his majesty said to you, "that he would do something for M. de Grignan," I by no means understand that he merely alluded to the great expence M. de Grignan had lately incurred; no, the king's answer appeared to me to bear this construction, "Madam, the favour you ask of me is a trifle, I will do something more for Grignan;" meaning, I suppose, the affair of the survivorship, which he knew would be a capital point for your family. I had no idea of the little present in question, and you know what I said upon that subject in my last letter. It rests with you, my dear, to set me right; and I beg you will do so, for I do not love to view things in a wrong light.

Madame de la Fayette has written me word that you appeared like an angel at court, that you spoke to the king, and that it was thought you were soliciting a pension for your husband. I returned a slight answer, "that I believed it was to entreat his majesty to consider the great expenses M. de Grignan had been obliged to incur in Provence," and that was all.

You relate inimitably the story of M. de Villequier and his mother-in-law. There seems no danger of her proving a Phedra to him. Had you read that part of your letter over, you would easily have conceived the manner in which it struck me. It is not unlike the story

of Joconde; and the chamber-maid yawning with fatigue at her long waiting, is admirable. I think madame d'Aumont's conduct very praiseworthy; it ought to silence the world, and satisfy her husband. What great doings in Savoy! I cannot believe the king will withhold his pity and assistance from the young princess of Baden, when she represents to him the situation of her mother, abandoned by all her children. I do not believe she will set out till her mother is gone; this good mother, it is true, has so much fire about her, that it is difficult to persuade one's-self she is not still in the prime of her youth. The princess de Tarente intends to receive her at Vitré. As for madame de Marbeuf, she is one of her old acquaintance; they have spent whole winters together in supping and playing at the palace of Soissons; you may judge how readily this will be renewed at Rennes. I have told my son the story of the chevalier de Soissons's engagement; we could neither of us have believed the eyes of a grandmother retained still so much power. I do not think the raising of the siege of Buda * worth mentioning to you; it is a piece of news hardly of sufficient consequence to obtain a place in my letter. I fancy the dauphiness †, however, will take the pains to be sorry: her brother has exposed himself so much, and acquitted himself so well, in this expedition, that it is a pity such an elector should be obliged to return from it.

Our *worthy* is very ill with one of those bad colds

* After having beaten the Turks, and repulsed the troops they were leading to the assistance of Buda, the duke of Lorraine was at length obliged to raise the siege, which had lasted for nearly four months.

† The dauphiness was always a German in her heart; this partiality, which the subsequent war increased and rendered more offensive, contributed, with other eccentricities of character, to alienate the affections of her husband, the king, and the whole court.

and coughs which you have seen him afflicted with. He is in his little closet. We take better care of him here than could be done at Paris. My daughter-in-law has gone through all the hot and cold regimen of the capuchins, without being affected either one way or the other by them. When the weather is fine, as it has been for these last three days, I venture out about two o'clock, and walk backwards and forwards before the gardeners, who are cutting wood, and representing the picture of winter, but without stopping to contemplate the scene; and after I have enjoyed all the heat of the sun, I return to the house, leaving the evening to those of a more hardy constitution. In this way do I govern myself to please you; and, very often, I do not stir out of the house at all. Coulanges's chair, a few books that my son reads admirably, and now and then a little conversation, will compose the whole of my occupation during the winter, and the subject of your anxiety: for I shall exactly follow your orders in all points, and every where.

My son understands perfectly well what *Wednesday* means *. To say the truth, we should be very dull without him, and he without us; but he manages matters so well, that there is generally a party of ombre in my apartments, and at intervals we read, and make comments on what we read; you know what sort of place the Rocks is. We have read a folio volume through in little more than a week; we have been engaged with M. Nicole, the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert, and the History of the Reformation in England; in short, those who are happy enough to have a taste for reading, need never be at a loss for amusement.

* This was one of madame de Sévigné's post-days.

LETTER DCCXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, November 29, 1684.

I see you, I pity you, you want to write to me, you have a thousand things to say, but madame de Lavardin, without caring for this, dines at ten o'clock, two hours sooner than usual, purposely to have time enough to pay you a visit: then comes madame de Lamoignon, and after her M. de Lamoignon; the latter, indeed, is enough to make you forget writing at all; but, at length, the hour draws near, and "I must write to my mother, let what will happen:" and you are right, my dear child, for I must hear from you by hook or by crook, as they say, nor must a post pass without that consolation which is life, breath, and food, to me; but if you should happen another time to be caught (this is your own expression), as you were on Saturday, scribble only a few lines, and, without ending your letter, send them to me, and write the remainder at your leisure; I shall understand what it means. Besides, I make it my earnest request to you, my child, that you will not fatigue yourself with answering my long letters line by line; consider they are only the chit-chat of a person who has no portion of her time taken up with visits or other affairs, as you necessarily have, so that it is entertainment to me, and, were it not out of pure compassion for you, I should not know when to stop; for if I thought only of myself, I should never have done: let me then gossip my fill, without your taking the pains to make a regular reply; talk to me only of yourself, of your affairs, and of what you say to those you love; every thing is safe with me, nothing is seen, nothing

comes round again: this it is that interests me, and excites my curiosity and attention. You have to set me right in regard to Versailles; I beg you will no longer let me be in the dark on that subject. Has madame de la Fayette yet said any thing to you respecting it? Inform me likewise what is become of *Guadiana;* methinks she is a long time making her appearance again. You have given me great pleasure by driving the princess Olympia* out of the hôtel de Carnavalet. I do not like her; I have a much greater regard for a pretty little personage, who would do extremely well to act the *duchess de Grignan.* It is by this title Coulanges always mentions you in his letters, with all the seriousness imaginable; I have laughed at it very heartily, and I wish it may have the same effect on you. He is still mad after that poor *Cuverdun*†; but it is an unaccountable folly, for which he must one day answer; for the poor woman says all the good things in the world of him; and take her for all in all, there is not a person in Britany who has a better heart or nobler sentiments. He laughs at me for this; but I am no dupe, quite the contrary; I am not blind, quite the contrary; but I know every one has his failing, and that hers is but a trifle in comparison with those which attack the nobler parts. Well, after all, my child, I am a wicked creature, and I cannot help laughing myself at Coulanges's folly: but I will make him no reply, lest some evil should befall me as a punishment for my ingratitude; for indeed nothing can equal the affection and friendship that both M. and madame de Coulanges have

* The heroine of a romance, who is represented as extremely delicate, thin, and languid. The word *duchess* which follows, shows that M. de Grignan aspired to a dukedom, and that his friends hoped to obtain it for him.

† This nick-name seems to designate madame de Marbeuf.

always shown me, or their attention to every thing that concerns me; and the letters of both are no small pleasure to me, though in different ways.

I went yesterday to dine with the princess; I left the good Marbeuf with her. This is the way in which your mother was dressed: I wore a good warm night-gown, which you despised, though a very pretty one, and the violet-coloured petticoat, embroidered with gold and silver, which I used in jest to call an under-petticoat, with a beautiful head-dress composed of an undress morning-cap: was I not very smart? but I found the princess dressed much in the same style, and I was satisfied on that point. Tell me a little what you wear; it will be something for my imagination to dwell upon. We had a great deal of conversation about the news that is now stirring. The princess of Baden comes through Angers, and is delighted with the tour: she has an excellent cook with her, but seldom makes use of him but on particular occasions. You required me the other day to give you intelligence of a certain person; I now request you to tell me something of Corbinelli, it is above a fortnight since I have seen a scrap of his writing, and it was more than three weeks since he wrote to me before. He makes a bad use of the liberty in which we indulge him of being irregular. Is his nephew returned? I have advised him to send for him.

You might, without scruple, have read madame de Vins's letter; I can take your word for your not having read it: she owed me an answer, and tells me, that not having seen you, and, consequently, having nothing to write respecting you, she did not think it right to trouble me with what related only to herself. When you write, make my remembrances to her, and endeavour to convey them as far as Pomponne. I am uneasy about the dauphin's illness. The chevalier writes me

word, that he is very well. Adieu, my lovely and beloved child; I can figure to myself no affection superior to that I bear you; it is an undiscovered country, beyond it.

LETTER DCCXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, December 13, 1684.

In vain they tell me it was only three months ago yesterday, since I bid you adieu, my dear countess, with a heart bursting with grief, and eyes overflowing with tears; no, I will never believe it: I assure you seriously, that I have lost all computation of time since our separation; all is confusion in my poor brain, and I am like one lost in a wood.

Twelve thousand francs from his majesty would have been no bad thing to have passed the winter with in your company; but this petition met with some difficulty. It was necessary to find these escheats in myself; which I have contrived to do, by living upon a part of what my son owes me, and laying by the whole of my income, in the mean time, for the payment of my debts; there was no other way left but this, though, indeed, it has cost dear to my heart, and even more so than I can express.

Never was any thing more happily imagined than what you wrote me respecting a great beauty, who was to make her appearance at Versailles, perfectly new, perfectly pure, indebted to nature only for her charms, and who, it was believed, would eclipse all other beauties. I assure you my curiosity was greatly raised to hear her name, and I expected some new beauty was really to be introduced at court, when, behold! it turned

out to be a river *, which, notwithstanding the regularity of its proceedings hitherto, has at length suffered itself to be drawn aside by an army of 40,000 men, no less a number being sufficient to make a bed for it. This seems to be a present of madame de Maintenon to the king, of what he most desired. I was not acquainted with the name of this river; but though it is not very celebrated, the inhabitants of its banks cannot fail to be surprised at its absence. It is an event that was not much to be expected in the common course of things, and our modern geographers will be as much at a loss as those who could not find the mountains of Ossa and Pelion, after Mercury had removed them, which induced the god to restore them again to their place †; but I fancy the king will not have so much complaisance for these gentlemen.

In my opinion M. de Montausier will not conciliate the family of Polignac, by breaking off, through his obstinacy, a marriage which was so well concerted, and had already gone so far ‡. M. de la Garde wrote to me upon the subject, and seems to think, as you do, that it is very wrong to behave thus to persons of high rank and distinction, and who are so much esteemed by mademoiselle d'Alerac and M. de Grignan. This, I fancy, is the opinion of most people. If you see madame de Lavardin, you will do right to speak your sentiments freely. I, who can see nothing like a duke at

* The river Eure, a part of whose waters were cut off a little below Chartres (at Pontgoin) with a design to bring them by an aqueduct to Maintenon, and from thence to Versailles. But the war of 1688, together with the sickness caused by opening the ground, occasioned the work to be discontinued, after it had been carried on as far as the camp of Maintenon; and it was never after resumed.

† See the *Contemplator*, one of Lucian's dialogues.

‡ See Letter of 24th July.

hand to comfort mademoiselle d'Alerac for her present loss, cannot help thinking that her fortune will prove no temptation to any one, after what has passed; and as to what she expects from her sister, it is a mere chimera, made use of only to answer the present purpose of disappointing her of so suitable and good a match. You may suppose that, after this, the higher powers will not be very desirous to risk the same fate; the refusal will be certain, but the subject of the refusal extremely uncertain, and quite Platonic. But all this time M. de Montausier seems to give himself very little concern about seeing his niece well settled, or the ill consequences of this affair*; but I assure you I am very uneasy at it, and very much interested in the last scene.

You always acquaint me with deaths that surprise me: the great Simiane was very subject to the gravel, and now he is cured; how quickly all this has taken place! You apostrophize the soul of my poor father, to inform you of the reason of the patience of certain courtiers; God grant he may not be suffering for a totally opposite character! You still persist in fatiguing yourself by answering every article of my letters; good heavens! cannot you let me have my own way? I have nothing else to do. You laugh at the sacred freedom established between Corbinelli and me; but I assure you it is a very good thing, and our friendship is not the less real and substantial for it. I do not say you should not write at all, but only that you should not overwhelm yourself with writing: for instance, though I shall not write to my friend to-day, I have not the less regard for him; he has sent me some very amusing anecdotes; I will repay him on Saturday night: in the mean time I shall

* Mademoiselle d'Alerac was niece to Julia d'Angennes, duchess of Montausier.

make free with his patience, from a certainty that I may do so.

Let me know what the chevalier thinks of Polignac; Would to heaven that our sentiments might agree! I see you in your dress at Versailles; but give me my daughter at Paris: I entreat her to go and see the poor duchess de Chaulnes as soon as she can, who is a little indisposed.

We have had tolerably fine weather for these two days, and we have made the most of it, but by starts. I defy the rheumatism to catch me, I love mild weather; but when it is so very mild as to spill any of its contents on our head, that is to say, when it rains or begins to grow dark, I am ready to cry. I begin to love the little woman who is in the hands of the capuchins. Adieu, my beloved child! I embrace you with all the affection of my heart.

LETTER DCCXIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Friday, December 15, 1684.

Little Beaulieu is on the point of setting out to play the man of consequence this winter at Versailles: happy creature! in six days he will see you; this idea awakens all my sorrows, and cuts me to the heart. He brings you the three deeds you have already seen, and which are exactly the same with the copy M. d'Ormesson sent me. If you wish to see them completely signed and sealed by my son, you have only to open the packet that contains them, seal it up again, and give it to Beaulieu, together with my letters, which he will take care to deliver according to their directions. Your brother executed these deeds very readily; for he is not in-

fected with the manners of this country. He was highly pleased to have in his possession again the note for 80,000 francs, which was a debt due from me to the *worthy*, and for which my son had made himself responsible for your security. He always intended to pay it; however, he was not a little pleased that the abbé gave him up his note, and that he has made you a present of another paper, of which Sévigné had not the least knowledge, though it related to part of his own fortune; but, for that very reason, you will say, he was the less sensible of the loss. He has thanked the good abbé with the same feeling we thank a kind father who has put the finishing stroke to his favours by settling us happily in marriage: had it not been for this seasonable assistance, your brother would absolutely have been a bankrupt. The spirits are calmed by dint of conversing familiarly, and making reason to be heard. In short, the worst is past, and things have turned out very happily both for you and for the repose of my life; it even extends beyond me, and when I die I shall leave my children and my dearest friends at peace with each other: this was the darling object I had in view, and it is with joy I see that I have not lost my labour.

I send you, my child, the most precious thing in my possession, which is half a bottle of balsam (baume tranquille). I can never have it filled again, as the capuchins have no more. It is by the help of this balsam that they cured the little woman of her nephritic complaints. They desire you to put ten or twelve drops of it into the same quantity of spirits of urine made pretty warm, and rub it well into your side, by which means it will penetrate to the seat of the disorder: they pretend that it is a sovereign remedy in these cases, as also for all complaints of the chest. I heartily wish you had no occasion to make use of it; but as that is too great a happiness to

be expected, I conjure you to try it. Your health often occasions me many uneasy moments; I am impatient to know how the colic, which is not a colic, has passed off. Talk to me of yourself as often as you can, but say nothing of new-year's gifts: it is very well when we are together, and can laugh; but I could now weep plentifully, if I chose to give way to my feelings, that we are separated.

LETTER DCCXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, December 27, 1684.

Without knowing your definitions or proofs of friendship, I am persuaded that I find them all naturally within myself. I do not, therefore, hesitate to give that precious balsam to the best part of a whole, of which I am but a fragment. Had I any reason to suppose that it would be of service to myself, the present would have additional merit; but, as the case now stands with me, I honestly declare to you, my child, that I have no nephritic complaint whatever, nor had I ever any of sufficient consequence to demand the aid of this noble remedy; keep it then carefully by you, for your own use.

I can easily conceive the agitation into which the unexpected appearance of Beaulieu must have thrown you; I am no stranger to these emotions. He has informed you how prudent I am grown; it is true, I no longer commit the follies in which I formerly took delight: I know not how it is, but the time insensibly comes, when we are apt to take a little more care of ourselves, and this is my case at present. The weather is extremely fine and mild just now, and we take our

walks as if it were still autumn. My mind was wholly occupied with you on Christmas eve; I saw you in idea at the convent of the Blues, while we were employed at our devotions in our chapel. Your brother has taken quite a serious, not to say religious, turn; he occupies himself with books of devotion, and seems affected by them. The time will come, when we shall think ourselves happy in having spent some part of our lives in these Christian avocations; death must be dreadful to a mind bereft of all support in that awful hour! His wife seems to partake his sentiments; in short, I am the most wicked of the three, but not so bad as to be quite a reprobate. He has read with great pleasure that part of your letter wherein you express yourself as so well satisfied with him; you always say things in the best manner possible, and the more amiable you appear, the more insupportable is this separation to me; but there are many things yet to settle, which concern you as much as myself, and I might as well not have made this journey at all, as to make it too short; so that I must resolve to drain the bitter cup to the bottom. Besides, as I observed to you in a former letter, the money I save by being here, serves to pay off a part of my debts elsewhere; without this expedient, what could I have done? You well know what I mean; it has cost me many an uneasy moment: and, indeed, what could you yourself have done, but for the assistance you received? At present, I fancy, you have made matters up tolerably well.

M. de Grignan has been very expeditious in coming from Lyons to Paris, considering the dreadful weather we have lately had; his return will determine the fate of mademoiselle d'Alerac; it has been her own fault, I believe, if she has not supplanted mademoiselle de la

Valette: was not this Laurière proposed by madame d'Usez?

I highly approve of your suppressing the custom of new-year's gifts; it would only have been a great expense to no purpose; that which you have sent me is inestimable, and comes from a heart which it is impossible to love and admire too much. I am so well convinced of the sincerity of your wishes for my life and health, that I take care of both, as belonging wholly to you, and which I cannot neglect without injuring a being I love much better than myself: how few mothers are there in the world who can with confidence say the same! You see, however, my child, that your affectionate and heroic sentiments are not thrown away upon me. You are really as much in want of a hundred crowns as the count de Fiesque*; but even that sum would not suffice you.

I said the other day that I should pity the count de Fiesque more now, than I did when walking on foot in his respectable poverty. You tell me a strange adventure of de Termes: the life of that man is really a romance; I find, however, that the king is not very well pleased that the affair has been talked of†. Let me entreat you, my dear, to see the duchess de Chaulnes now and then; as she is not well versed in friendship, she has all the warmth of a novice, and writes me word that she is always seeking for some one to talk to of me; that she had been to pay a visit to madame de la Fay-

* John Louis-Marie count de Fiesque, to whom the king had obliged the Genoese to pay 100,000 crowns, or about 18,000 pounds sterling, for which he had a claim upon that republic.

† This apparently alludes to a combat he sustained with the assistance of his people, against eight or ten horsemen, whose unknown chief came for the purpose of defying him.

ette, where she saw you just returned from Versailles: in short, I have inspired with love a heart to which the passion was unknown.

I observe that your wishes for success in your affairs all tend to the advantage of your son, without any regard to yourself; in like manner, you are my only object in all I do: and it is no small comfort to me, that from the superiority I have over you, in point of age, I shall, according to the common course of nature, always preserve the rank I now hold with you: happy thought, to reflect, that, so long as I live, I shall never live without you!

I am satisfied with the papers I sent you; you may without ceremony open them all: I believe you will never have any cause of dispute with your brother; he loves peace, is a true Christian; and you are quite right in saying that you have as much reason to be satisfied with his conduct in the present instance, as with that of his father-in-law; I am certain it was always his desire that you should not be a loser: in short, my dear child, I find, to my inexpressible joy, that peace and harmony are established in the hearts where I most wished them to reign.

And now, my dear countess, I must desire you to take neither the side of St. Remi nor of Châtelet, but observe, as I shall do, a strict neutrality; the princess espouses the cause of St. Remi, my son that of Châtelet, on madame de Tisé's account*; let them settle this point among themselves: perhaps the affair may be decided by the parliament, and so taken out of the hands of the marshals of France.

Adieu, my beloved; load Beaulieu with your commissions; for as he is going to reside at Versailles, he may

* See Letter of 15th November.

be useful to you in many respects; therefore make use of him as if he were your own. I have another thing to request, which I conjure you not to refuse me; that is, that you will not think of accompanying M. de Grignan to Gif, as it will be both a fatiguing and a dangerous journey for you at this season of the year; you know that you suffered three bleedings for the sore throat, by your former jaunt thither. I entreat M. de Grignan to act for me, and to be careful of your health. This is the first favour I have to ask of him, after congratulating him on his safe return to you.

LETTER * DCCXVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, December 31, 1684.

Your letter came as far as this to find me, my dear cousin. It has informed me of the death of my poor aunt. In reality, I have felt the force of kindred; I have seen in her the blood of her blessed mother, and of her brave and illustrious brother. I am the only one left of this branch: but you, whose merit and noble actions are exclusively your own, and who would be the subject of deep regret to those who should live long enough to lose you; you, I am persuaded, from the regimen you observe, and your choice of wholesome food, will have a second crop of twenty years, even at the age of eighty-six. So I shall leave you behind me, my dear cousin, to keep up my name.

I return to my poor aunt. She preserved her ruling passion, then, to the last moments of her life. You describe to me, very pleasantly, the means she adopted to prevent engaging herself, in case she should recover, and to hinder M. d'*** from coming to see her.

This reminds me of the pains she took to meet me at Monjeu, from the fear that I should pay her a visit. But what pleases me most, is, to hear she was charitable to the poor. This virtue alone is sufficient to ensure the salvation of the daughter of the mother of Chantal. Be kind enough to send the enclosed note of condolence to my cousin de Toulonjon. I fear it will arrive too late; and that his consolation will be of the same date as yours.

I shall spend the winter here, and a great part of the summer. I am very comfortable with my son and his bride. I suppose you will not return sooner than I shall: but we must not fail to write to each other occasionally. The beautiful Magdelonne remains at Paris. This is a great grief; but so have the Fates decreed it. Our dear friend will be always anxious to serve you, to the last hour of his life. He cannot be too much beloved. I deeply regret the dinners I should have given to my niece de Coligny, when she might have seen M. de Lamoignon. Have you not kept her dear little boy with you? he will be a charming companion. Adieu, my dear cousin. Keep up your courage, which has often been my admiration, and do not surrender but upon honourable terms, that is to say, after the age of eighty-six. My son and his wife assure you of their humble respects, and I embrace you sincerely.

LETTER DCCXVII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO COUNTESS DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, Jan[illegible], 1690.

I DO not think the world can boast a more amiable being than yourself; but your merit, which all the world acknowledges, would not touch me so sensibly as it does, if you were not, at the same time, the best and most affectionate child that ever existed. Where shall we find one who, like you, is so attentive to the health, the life, the correspondence of a mother, and who makes her the continual subject of conversation among her friends? Never was the health of a mother celebrated at such a distance as mine: I was in reality one of the party at the hotel de Chaulnes, and I do not doubt that I shall be as well entertained at the supper this evening, where I shall find M. de Lamoignon *; I wished to mention him to you, to see if you profited by your neighbourhood: but this supper has set me right on that score. I should be sorry that Coulanges should put such an affront upon you, as to refuse your invitation.

It is lucky for me that I had by me some of that divine sympathetic powder: my son will tell you what a good state my leg is in: it is true, indeed, that a little sore, which we thought healed, has lately given some indications of breaking out again; but it was only to have the honour of being subdued by the sympathetic powder; you may therefore depend upon a complete cure: I have managed myself extremely well; as to my walking, it has rather done good than harm; for,

* Christian Francis de Lamoignon, president of the parliament of Paris, son of Guillaume de Lamoignon, first president.

when the swelling and pain are abated, the leg must not be kept continually upon a chair. I take the greatest care of my health; it is for this reason I have avoided the evening air, and every thing that might, perhaps, have cured me by making me ill. I have governed myself according as I felt well or otherwise: the balsam was of no service, which made me apply with joy to your sympathetic powder; it is indeed a divine remedy; the wound has now changed its aspect, and is, in a manner, dry and healed: in short, if, by the assistance of this powder, which God has sent me by your hand, I can once more walk about, as I used to do, you may say to yourself, with certainty, My mother is perfectly well.

But, after this long harangue about my health, a word or two of yours. Madame de la Fayette has given me to understand how heartily you intend to laugh at the physicians, if this powder should cure your side; but, my child, is it possible to have that effect? what do Josson and Alliot say of it? If it really should do so, I shall consider it as a gift from heaven. Indeed you both ought to think seriously of something that is likely to do you service in this complaint; inform me fully of all particulars.

But what a stroke for the triumphant Choiseuil! What a glorious winter has this dreadful disorder * cut

* This disorder was the small-pox. An anecdote is found in Bussy's Letters, which explains the epithet *triumphant*, as applied to madame de Choiseuil: it is dated a few days before her illness, and gives an excellent idea of the court, and the manners of the ladies, at that period. It is related by madame de Montmorency, a woman of an amiable and sprightly turn of mind.

"Madame de Duras and the duchess de Choiseuil have had a quarrel respecting a place at the opera, at Versailles; the latter, coming with madame de Bellefond, asked a box-keeper, for whom he reserved those places? He replied, for madame de Duras. 'It is all right,' said madame

short in the middle! They say she walked a whole night in the frost, preferring to die rather than to have it. What you say to me on that subject [illegible] farther than ourselves. Let me recommend you to read the opera: you are really too severe, to [illegible] ridicule passages that will bring tears into your eyes when you understand them better; for my part, I have a great veneration for what has been handed down to us with the approbation of antiquity.

The good abbé is very much surprised that the debt which you with so much honesty and generosity put before your own, should not be thought a sufficient security; and he cannot help thinking that M. de Montausier has suffered himself to be guided by very rigorous and ill-disposed persons. What Favier * said to you was admirable; you will profit by it; you are in an excellent place to have the best advice. This will prove a very critical year for your affairs, and M. de Grignan's presence will be highly necessary. As it has not pleased God to permit me to witness the termination of these things, and as I can act no other part but that of wishing, and lifting up my hands to heaven for your success, be assured that I will acquit myself of that part to the utmost of my power; and that this place contains, above all others, the persons most friendly to you and your son.

de Choiseuil, and sat down. The deceived box-keeper retired. Madame de Duras arrived the next moment: the box-keeper having related to her what had passed, she went to madame de Choiseuil, and said to her; 'With respect to the Graces, the Pleasures, the Loves, and even the lovers, madam, I must yield to you; but in other respects you must yield to me.' Madame de Choiseuil, without taking any notice of her, turned to madame de Bellefond, and said, 'My God! how can a person so ugly as madame de Duras, think of coming to a place of public amusement?' and she resolutely kept her seat."

* A celebrated advocate.

You truly oblige us by informing us, from time to time, how things go on: I have no glimpse yet of our marriage. I thought very seriously of taking vengeance on the chevalier for his epigram; but, upon reflection, I have found it more convenient to imagine, that he had never said any thing half so obliging to me as in this instance.

I went to see the princess de Tarente on Thursday; she has brought back madame de Marbeuf, terribly afflicted with a cold and fever; the good creature would write me two or three lines, though her hand could scarcely hold the pen: I find she is determined not to call in a physician, nor suffer herself to be bled, but to undertake her own cure, with simple barley-water; we shall see the event of this, and according as it succeeds, or fails, we shall censure or applaud her; for my own part, I am of opinion she will recover.

I have just read your letter to my son; I am much affected at it, and particularly with what relates to me; it is impossible to be more adorable than you are in an intercourse of affection: preserve all these treasures for me, that I may some day enjoy them fully. Your sister-in-law is very far from being in danger of an hemorrhage; on the contrary, she stands in need of some medicine, to let her know that she has any blood in her veins. She is still a very pleasing little woman, who delights in hearing me talk of you, and who admires the strength of affection you display towards me:

LETTER DCCXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Monday, January 20, 1685.

To-day at four o'clock in the afternoon, I received your letter of Saturday, which was the day before yesterday: this is a dispatch that would serve to comfort me for the absence of any other person; but, my dear child, it is impossible not to feel, like you, the grief of being thus separated, when we were upon such delightful terms together, and understood one another so perfectly; you cannot suppose me insensible to these things. I will inform you to-morrow of the fair way my leg is in; and the next day, I hope, my son will be able to tell you that it is perfectly cured: for my part, I am so confident of it, that, were it not for our scrupulous exactness, seeing that every thing is but two days sooner, or two days later, we should already have sung "Te Deum" in our letters. The injured leg is now like the other, no redness, no swelling, no pain; is it not therefore cruel, to keep a person in suspense about a thing that is as good as concluded? But now, my dear, a word or two of the *day of monsters*, as you call it; it is quite novel and wonderful. We laughed till the tears came into our eyes at your account of your three visits; the first is a true picture, of which the original is fully present to my imagination. Talk to me no more of my letters, or my descriptions; if you were to see some of your own, you would be obliged to confess that I was far from being the best painter of the hotel de Carnavalet; in short, it is our misfortune, that we feel the beauties of your letters more forcibly than you do. The house to which your love for me carried you, is ano-

ther description equally natural and uncommon; and the figure of madame de Bussy, with her scarecrow of a head-dress, is indeed capital. It requires an infinite share of imagination to remember names in the midst of all this. But our last night's supper, my dear*; it appears to me to have been elegant, and well conducted. I was there with my chosen friends†, and should have been very much vexed if M. de Lamoignon's colic had prevented him from giving us his company. I began to despair of Coulanges, but at length every thing fell out as could be wished, and we sung *gaudeamus*. Coulanges is really worth his weight in gold. I preserve all his letters. He writes me word that the king intends to improve the air of the palace, by banishing the *nymph and swain*‡; upon which he adds, that his wife says, "The king has too much piety to remove the benediction from the house of Monsieur." As this is rather new to me, I must acknowledge I thought it very prettily turned.

Madame de Lavardin seems highly pleased with your visit to her; I am delighted at this, and am more obliged to you for it, than for that you made on my account. Madame de Lavardin is an excellent person to consult on all occasions; I am sure she would console you for the three monsters you have seen. I have a great regard for that old and good friend.

Tuesday 30.

Our oil has made no great progress these last twenty-four hours; but your powder must not be offended at

* See the preceding Letter.

† Madame de Sévigné loved to transport herself, in imagination, to every place where she knew her daughter was, and to speak of things as if she herself had been present while they were transacted.

‡ Madame de Grancey, and the chevalier de Lorraine.

it, since it is not expected that the cure should be instantaneous, provided it be effected at last.

I have read, with a great deal of pleasure, a letter from Corbinelli, wherein, by your order, he gives me an account of a very entertaining dispute, that was decided by the abbé de Polignac*; he appears to have been confounded, and struck dumb, with the sprightliness of your wit. Do you think you could not remind the abbé of a mother you have in Britany? Has he quite forgotten her? He is now a perfect court abbé, and very different from the one I once knew, buried over head and ears in a black gown. Madame de Marbeuf has had the courage to cure herself of a violent cold and fever, by refusing to see any physician, or to be bled.

Wednesday, January 31, eight o'clock at night.

My son is now writing to you separately, and I imagine, that, without comparing notes, we shall be pretty much in a story, for we both write the truth. My leg is nearer being healed than it was yesterday; and if you can forgive me my rebellion against the sympathetic powder, and will indulge us with fifteen days instead of four, the powder will be proved to have had its effect.

* Melchior de Polignac, afterwards cardinal of that name. "He was as good a Latin poet as it is possible to be in a dead language, very eloquent in his own, and one of those who have proved that it is easier to make Latin than French verses. Unfortunately for him, in confuting Lucretius, he combats Newton. He died in 1741." Voltaire's History of Lewis XIV.

LETTER DCCXIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday morning, February 4, 1685.

My cure has proved more tedious than we at first imagined, but still it is you who have cured me. We thought, indeed, that it would have been an affair of two or three days only, but a fortnight is now past; this is all our mistake. The scar wears the appearance of being soon completed, and, to hasten it, we shall, with your permission, lay aside the oil, and apply the black ointment you sent us, which will not at all impede the operation of the powder. I desire, therefore, you will banish the idea of a wide-gaping wound, since, in fact, it is very inconsiderable, and my leg is neither inflamed nor swelled.

I have been at the princess's; I have taken a walk; so that you must no longer consider me as fit only for an hospital. I have not even the air of an invalid. I am perfectly blooming, and no longer in tears; so that there remains no reason for pitying me, my dear child, for any thing but being deprived of your company, and able only to share *metaphysically* in your parties. This is, indeed, a loss. As we are very *cogitative* in this part of the world, we are now and then obliged to swallow a bitter less agreeable than yours; however, I gather strength and courage, let the chevalier say what he pleases. This is the real state of my mind and body. I tell you things just as they are, and I must have a very strong conviction of your affection for me, to send you such a journal, in the midst of the pleasures of a court, in which you are at this time engaged. My affection for you is natural, and founded upon many substantial

reasons; but yours for me is wonderful, singular, uncommon, almost without example; and this it is which occasions mine to be so great as it is. Madame de la Fayette writes me word that she has seen you, that you have had several conversations together, and that she is perfectly *infatuated* with you; I use her own expression: she adds, that you would be perfect, if you had not too much sensibility, for which she is very angry with you. It is thus my friends receive and admire you; for madame de Lavardin has written me a whole sheet on the same subject, as likewise the good duchess de Chaulnes: all these remind you of me. You describe so exactly the different expressions of those who wished to see me in my apartment again, that I had them all present before my eyes. I regretted extremely my not being at the supper, when the entertainment was so elegant, and the company so good, and in such high spirits. M. de Lamoignon seems to know the merit of the good housewife of Carnavalet; believe me, you cannot make too much of such a friend. I partake in all the joy of him and his family, in their place in the council; but at the same time am not a little concerned at the nephritic disorder with which he is so tormented. It is a cruel thing not to have a single day free from pain; it is a constant abatement of his happiness.

I am highly amused with all the bustle in the Chaulnes family, since the duchess can never be jealous; I think, if she were so, her friendship for me would have led her to inform me of it. Coulanges has made me laugh heartily at this story, and I join with him in admiring *saint Trifler*, and the disposition of those who can compass all their ends, when another person could not advance a step towards it. I thank you for your news. I cannot find out the reason of Flamaren's being in disgrace with Monsieur. I do not think our good

marshal d'Estrades * will carry on very great intrigues in this bustling court.

Heaven preserve your health, my dear, such as you now tell me it is. I fancy the succory soups are very good; I shall try them myself: do not neglect your bitters; they are life to you. I fancy you do not use the sympathetic powder, nor have you yet tried the balsam. I cannot bear the thoughts of Rhodes † selling a post which had been so long in his family. I think I ought to have been with you at Gourville's dinner; the whole house of Pomponne would not have kept me away. I envy and regret all your pleasures, but much more that of seeing and being with you, and enjoying an affection which is so dear to me.

So you will have the pleasure of seeing the doge ‡! This is as if the whole republic had come in a body; but what can resist the will of our monarch?

Five o'clock in the evening.

My son has just seen my leg; I assure you he finds it in a very fair way, and, abating the expedition of

* Godfrey count d'Estrades, marshal of France, had lately been made governor to the duke de Chartres, afterwards duke of Orleans, and regent of the kingdom.

† Charles Pot, marquis de Rhodes, who had lately sold his post of grand-master of the state-ceremonies in France, to Julius Armand Colbert, marquis of Blainville. The marquis de Rhodes was the fifth person of his family who had successively enjoyed this honourable post.

‡ Of Genoa (Francis Marie Imperiale Lercari), who was expected, with four of the principal senators of that republic, at the court of Lewis XIV. to make submission, in the name of their state, to that monarch. On the 15th of May following, they had their first audience.

It was this doge, who, on being asked what he found most extraordinary at Versailles, replied, "To see myself there."

Treated with as much politeness by the king, as with haughtiness by Louvois and Croissy, he said, "The king subjugates our hearts by the manner in which he receives us, but his ministers restore us to our liberty."

four days, all the world must allow, that I owe my cure to the sympathetic powder. He has just applied the black ointment for making the cicatrix, which is all that remains to be done; and we preserve the rest of the powder carefully, for some other important occasion. Nevertheless, my child, I still maintain that you have cured me, only not with the miraculous promptitude you imagined. I have been taking a walk; you may see I am neither sick nor lame, therefore set your mind at rest. I am rejoiced to find the chevalier is so well. I affectionately embrace M. de Grignan. The *worthy* salutes you both. He never [illegible] about me, for he is so lost in accounts and calculations, that he quite forgets his poor niece.

LETTER DCCXX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 7, 1685.

You cannot do better than divert your melancholy at Versailles, though it would be still better to have no melancholy to divert. I am afraid the sympathetic powder has no effect on old disorders, for it has only cured the least troublesome of my little wounds. I at present apply the black ointment, which is an admirable remedy; and I am so near being cured, that you ought no longer to trouble your head about me, otherwise than to love me, and share with me in the pleasing hope with which I am now animated. I have not a single symptom of fever; I am like another person: I eat moderately; when it is fine, I walk out, for I am advised to use my legs, as there is no inflammation; I write, read, and work, and receive your letters with my usual eagerness and raptures. This is the real state

of affairs with me; and you may rest assured, that I dislike too much to be deceived with regard to you, to practise any deception with you myself.

I am at present in my room, the sun shines upon me, and I will not swear that I shall not take a walk upon our terrace. Calm your imagination, then, my dear countess, and remove the veil of apprehension, that prevents you from beholding me as I really am. Think no more of the poor weeping woman with the *pious Eneas* at her feet; it is all false, I assure you. I intend, however, to spare my legs as much as possible, because, when once they are inflamed, they are not very soon appeased again. The other day I tried a dose of friar Angé's purgative infusion, and found myself the better for it; but, after all, I see no reason for disturbing good health; and slight medicines, upon the whole, do more harm than good.

I shall now conclude, leaving you in the midst of the glorious bustle in which I fancy you to be engaged; assured, that, even in this situation, you do not think of me with less affection than when alone in your apartment. Of what other person can the same be said? But who, on the other hand, can feel more sensibly, than I do, the charms of this affection?

LETTER DCCXXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 14, 1685.

Though I know you are at Versailles, though I believe and hope you are well, and though I am sure you have not forgotten me, yet, as I have received no letter from you by this post, I cannot help being uneasy, and anxious to know the cause; for how can I dispense with the greatest comfort of my life? I do not tell you half

the pleasure your letters give me. It is the fear of being troublesome to you, that restrains me from expatiating as much as I would on that head. In reading over your last letter, I observed, with heartfelt pleasure, the affectionate manner in which you express yourself on the bare hope of seeing me again next spring; but a cruel improbability, which stares me in the face, prevents me from indulging myself in that hope, and I have patiently submitted all to the will of Providence.

My son and his wife are at Rennes; they were called away by business. The poor little woman is so terribly afflicted with the vapours, attended frequently with fever, and a distracting head-ache, that I have advised her to consult the capuchins; for it was they who kindled this flame within her, by the violence of their medicines. My son takes Jacob's essence two or three times a day, which must certainly have a wonderful effect. It is always better to be in a large town, than in the open country. For my part, I am here all alone; but that I may not be without a human being to speak to, I have taken to me that pretty little girl M. de Grignan was so fond of; for she reads to me when I work, and walks with me when I walk; and God, who always blends good with evil, has made me amends for being deprived of society, by a perfect cure. I am advised to walk now and then, as I have no swelling, and it gives me spirits. Hitherto faith has proved stronger than truth; but now, my dear, my cure is complete, and Heaven has been pleased it should be by your hands*. My son was complaining of this the other day; for, to say the truth, it was owing to him, though with a very different intention, that my leg was so long in getting well. As he was setting out on Monday, he bid adieu,

* See Letter 4th February.

very drolly, to my now hardly perceptible sore, saying, he should never see it again; and that, having lived so long together, he could not but feel some concern at parting with it for ever.

The princess no sooner heard that my son, who you know is not on friendly terms with her, was set out, than she flew hither with all the affection in the world. Adieu, my beloved child; you know with what tenderness I embrace you.

LETTER DCCXXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 27, 1685.

Ah, my child! was ever any thing so ill-timed as the death of the king of England *, just at the eve of a masquerade? My poor little marquis † is very unfortunate to have such an unexpected event thrown in the way of his pleasure. I know nothing that can comfort him for this disappointment, but the universal encomiums that have been given to his charming dress, and the hope, that the masquerade is only put off for a time.

My dear child, I make you my compliments of condolence on these great occurrences, and expect yours in return upon my mistaken ideas; for I was at the masquerade, the opera, and the ball, snug in a corner, contemplating you with admiration; in short, I was in as great an agitation as you may suppose your poor mother to experience on such an occasion,—and, after all, there was no entertainment of any kind.

I enter into your sentiments, my beautiful dear, bet-

* Charles II., who died 16th February 1685.

† Louis-Provence, marquis de Grignan, madame de Sévigné's grandson.

ter than any one. Yes, yes, I can very well conceive that we are transfused into our children, and, as you say, feel more keenly for them than for ourselves: I have sufficiently experienced these emotions, which are not without their pleasure when the object is deserving of them, and of the admiration of every one besides. Your son pleases extremely; there is something inexpressibly smart and agreeable in his countenance: the eye does not pass lightly over him as over others in general, but rests attentively. Madame de la Fayette tells me she has written to madame de Montespan, that she had engaged her honour that you and your son would have reason to be satisfied with her. I know no one who would be more happy to serve you than madame de la Fayette.

I am not at all surprised, that you should wish to go to Livri during this fine weather; for myself, I am all the early part of the day in these beautiful walks, but never dare encounter the cold of the evening. I wear your handsome Brandebourg, which is quite a full dress; my leg is well, and I walk as well as any other person; be not therefore uneasy that I use it, for I should absolutely die if I were confined to the house in such fine weather. I have written to my son, that I have nothing more to do with him, that I can walk as well as he, and bid him mind his own business: he and his wife are still enjoying the pleasures of Rennes, from whence they are not to return till Shrove Sunday; I am not sorry for this, as I have company enough.

The princess frequently comes to partake my sunshine; she has given the good abbé a divine medicine, which has perfectly cured him of the head-ache and fainting fits, which alarmed me dreadfully: the princess is certainly an Esculapius in her way; I am serious, for the capuchins themselves allow that her dis-

pensary affords some of the most rare and valuable drugs in the universe, and she has performed an infinite number of cures.

The *worthy* wishes he could do the honours of the house for you at Livri; for if you intend to keep your Lent there, you will have but indifferent cheer: I hope you do not think of living upon a Lent diet, with that pain in your side; I think you have already tried your disorder pretty well, by the many journeys you have taken to Versailles: as to living low, I think it would be destruction to you, for you require something to keep up your strength; and yet I receive daily accounts how well you look; madame de Vins writes me word that you are quite another person to what I left you. You say time respects you for my sake: it is excellent of you to talk of time!

But is it not extraordinary that we have not yet had a word together on the death of the king of England? He was by no means an old man, and he was a monarch; this shows that death spares no one. It will be a great happiness, if he was a catholic in his heart, and died in the faith of our holy religion. England appears to me a theatre, that is about to furnish some very extraordinary scenes: the prince of Orange, the duke of Monmouth, an infinite number of Lutherans, and a confirmed aversion to all catholics: but time will discover in what way Providence will direct the performances, after this tragical event*; however, it seems it will not put a stop to the

* Charles II. was sixty-five years of age, and had reigned about twenty-five years, reckoning from the restoration of the Stuarts. He received the sacraments agreeably to the rites of the church of Rome, but more, it is said, in compliance with the entreaties of his brother, than the dictates of his conscience. He had some good private qualities. But, as a prince, his character, says the impartial Hume, was

diversions at Versailles, since I find you are to return there on Monday. You say a thousand kind things of the concern it would give you to leave me behind at Paris, if I were there; but as this, to my great regret, is not the case, make the most of this opportunity, follow the court: no one is formed to make a better figure there, and I think every thing seems to tend towards the completion of your wishes. Mine, though made at such a distance, are not less ardent and sincere, than if I were with you. I feel, though less delicately, the truth of a remark you made to me one day, and which I then laughed at; that you were so much mistress of my imagination and my heart, that I had you always present with me: this is very true, my child, but I must own I had rather enjoy a little more of reality.

Before I conclude, my dear child, I must tell you this. You have an idea that your brother is a clever fellow, that he is a connoisseur in cookery, and knows how to order an entertainment in the best manner: so far from it, he knows nothing of the matter; his man Larmechin still less, and the cook least of all; indeed it is not to be wondered at, if one who was a tolerable

"dangerous to his subjects, and dishonourable to himself." To rid himself of his parliament, he had placed himself in a state of disgraceful dependence on Lewis XIV. It has been said of him, that he never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one. Judging by the following anecdote, he carried farther even than policy required, the practice of dissimulation, which would be, as it is declared, the necessary virtue of kings, if it be true that weakness and indolence are their natural vices. It is said, that Charles II. having reproached his minister Shaftesbury, with being "the greatest knave in the three kingdoms," he replied, "Apparently your majesty only includes subjects."

Madame de Sévigné speaks of the state of England in the character of a well-informed person. The rebellion of Monmouth and his tragical end in the same year, and James II. dethroned and driven out of the kingdom three years afterwards by his son-in-law, justified but too well her predictions.

cook should be entirely spoiled here: in short, I, whom you despise so much, am the eagle of this house, and no one presumes to pass his judgement upon any dish till my countenance has been consulted. The ambition of letting you know that I reign over a tribe of ignorant people, has extorted this silly account from me.

LETTER DCCXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 28, 1685.

You are now returned to Versailles, and your masquerade goes on swimmingly: the death of the king of England has not been able to damp the ardour of the courtiers in their pursuits after the pleasures of the carnival. I hear of nothing but your beauty; as you are not yet between the two ages, make the most of that lovely face which obtained you so many praises, even when languishing in sickness: how many more then will fall to your share now you are in the bloom of health! Upon the whole, a pleasing symmetry of features, or what we call beauty, is not to be despised. I expect you will tell me a great deal of news of my dear little boy: I have been strangely deficient of late; I was two days at Versailles* seeing him dance, and admiring every motion and step; I have it all to begin over again. I thought I supped on Sunday last at the hotel de Chaulnes, and instead of that it was a dinner on Monday; in short, you impose upon my credulity.

What a droll story, and how humourously told, is that of Bouquet! What confusion for that ancient and

* See the preceding Letter.

honourable house! Was not the fair *bouquetière Glycera* strangely discomposed? Such an adventure would never have entered into my imagination: I think I see the stately dame, and the poor innocent youth, that could hardly look any one in the face: but what pleases me more than all the rest is, the relapse; these brothers, however, with their long swords, are insufferable, tell me how they could possibly extort a promise? In the mean time, my dear, rest assured that not a syllable of this shall ever escape me, not only because you desire it, which is sufficient, but because I should myself make a scruple of speaking of it to any one.

The story of the abbé broken upon the wheel is really shocking; Corbinelli will tell you, he was of a very good family, and might have made a respectable figure in the church. I declare to you, that when I read the sentence of this poor creature, I was forced to have recourse to my smelling-bottle; a whole week under ground, with his head downwards! The very idea is suffocation; but is it possible to live a whole week without eating? There are strange planets! a pretty conclusion this abbé has made, a pretty profit, by stealing a bank-note! But see what human nature is capable of, when abandoned by God!

The *worthy* is perfectly recovered from his giddiness; at one time he had quite lost his sight, and could not stand; I was terribly alarmed: I wrote you a letter on this subject, which I may, perhaps, send you some future day; it contained a few random reflections, of which you may make such use as you think proper. I could make an excellent one of Josson's powder, if my leg stood in need of such assistance: but I am perfectly cured, thank God *and you*, as they say in this country. I walk with ease and pleasure, and amply make up for all the time I have lost.

You have great reason to praise the abbé de Polignac as you do; he is highly deserving of esteem, and has a well organised head of his own; but you speak very slightly of his brother, who seems to slip through your hands without your endeavouring to detain him: I am extremely sorry for M. and madame de Guitaut: disputes make me shudder: nothing is certain in this life. You will succeed against Aiguebonne, he is in misfortune.

LETTER DCCXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Ash-Wednesday, March 7, 1685.

Well, my dear countess, I am as forward in my carnival here, as you and my little marquis are at Versailles. I spent my Shrove Monday with the princess, where we had as pretty a little elegant dinner as could be; she talked to me about the masquerade, and I read her your account of the little Indians, which is so happily related. Yesterday I had a worthy friend of the truth to dine with me; an honest pious creature, who was superior of the late M. d'Aleth's seminary, and who, after closing the eyes, and performing the last pious offices to that truly saint-like prelate, retired to his own family; he has not spoken to any one in the country but to me, for these two years past. We are acquainted with the same persons, have the same friends, and the same sentiments, with this difference only, that he is a saint, and I am not one; this is the misfortune; however, I spent my Shrove Tuesday very agreeably.

My son is still at Rennes; and I am delighted he is there, because he seems to be delighted at it himself. He cannot tell you more respecting my leg than I have

done, for I have told you the undisguised truth; I was troubled indeed with a few heats and pimples after the wound closed, but, by the help of your arquebusade-water, every thing was soon set to rights: *C'est ainsi qu'en partant je vous fais mes adieux.* (It is thus, at parting, I bid you adieu.) After an intimacy of four months, some bold stroke, some grand separation, was necessary; this has confirmed my cure, and it is by this means I shall now resume the chain of my walks as usual, which were only to be interrupted for four days. I am sure you must be convinced I do not deceive you; can you, after this, my child, say with a safe conscience, that I pass lightly over what relates to myself? Can my silence occasion you any alarm? I will believe also what you say of yours; I wish you perfect health, as much for my own sake as for yours: the recollection of your late illness, and the fear of its return, create strange emotions in my heart. God preserve you from such a situation, and me also.

Coulanges has sent me a very pretty description of your entertainment at the hotel de Chaulnes; no one in my opinion can excel him in the pleasing art of giving to the most common occurrences an air of novelty. I find you are grown a dabbler in politics: your last party was composed of persons who answer exactly to what were formerly called *des importans**: you will let me know how the conversation passed off.

Our little hero has been the object of universal admiration; madame de la Fayette and her son have written me wonders respecting him: this will prove a great winter for him, my dear; he is likely to advance so rapidly in life, that if you had given him the same educa-

* It must be remembered, that during the minority of Lewis XIV. the duke de Beaufort's party went by this name, and the party of the great Condé by that of the *petits-maîtres*.

tion which youth received formerly, it would have done him great disservice; on the contrary, you have followed the only proper method, and it is very evident to me, that he will make a distinguished figure in the world, at an age when others are but just beginning to enter upon it. He will have an important character to fill at the age of fourteen; and it is right that he should be introduced two years previously; he has been spoken of, he must be seen; and your residence at Paris will happily contribute to that end: had it not been for you, he would still have been confined to his room, under the eye of a tutor; but your presence at court, and the manner in which you have brought him up, will be the making of his fortune. I have long reflected upon all this, but chiefly this winter. He has already been seen by the king, who has viewed him with attention: his figure is pleasing, and his countenance by no means common; so that we may suppose, if words had followed thoughts, you would have heard such as would not have been disagreeable to you. You will be at no great loss to conceive how much I interest myself in all these things.

What you said of the abbé Charier is very true; he has not the elegance of his father; but he has a very just and upright way of thinking, no small share of understanding, and a good heart, which I would not advise him to exchange with any at Lyons* or Paris. You are going to have several of the Grignans with you; is M. de la Garde to accompany them? He writes me word that he intends to be there. I should, as well as you, take advantage of this agreeable society; but, alas! I have yet finished only half my career†: I

* The abbé Charier was then at Lyons.

† Madame de Sévigné had resolved to remain a whole year at the

should have no objection to take six months from the account, if our other accounts would tally; but we shall see how it will please Providence to dispose of us all.

I find the king of England's death has turned out more philosophical and English, than Christian and Catholic. His *Farewell, king!* are words that almost choke me; they excite infinite reflections; they show an uncommon share of fortitude: he was not old; he quitted many desirable things in the prime of life and the midst of his reign, though his life was a life of debauchery, and his reign a reign of tumult, and *de Caron pas un mot* (of Charon not a word). Adieu, my beloved child; a thousand compliments to the dear count, and the clumsy vinegar-merchant, who rolled his wheelbarrow so awkwardly: the account of the masquerade has amused me, but I see nothing of the duke de Bourbon, who used to dance so well. I knew before that old Choiseuil had one rib broken, but two are rather too much.

My dear little marquis, let me kiss you, and congratulate you on your late success. My imagination has been highly delighted with a pretty little Indian, who dances admirably, holds up his head nobly, and pleases every body.

LETTER DCCXXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, April 11, 1685.

INDEED, my dear countess, you are too good even to send me a single word from Versailles! How I admire

Rocks, in order to retrieve her affairs, and she did not arrive till the 21st of September, 1684.

you in the midst of that concourse of all that is superb and gay! and I cannot help laughing to see you running from table to church with your mouth full, and, the moment the sermon, with which you are very much affected, is over, from thence to the play. It is all excellent, my beauty; but it is now time to take a little rest: remember your side; you will inflame it by attempting too much. You may easily judge of my sentiments by your own, and that I cannot quite excuse you for running the risk of giving me the most painful alarm: but you may be perfectly easy on my account; nothing but the bad weather we have had of late has prevented me from exercising my new leg. I still treat it as a visitor; I do not make free with it on all occasions: it is a stranger that I want to accustom insensibly to my habits. I propose nothing extraordinary or unreasonable to it; and when it has taken a tolerable walk, I do not say to it, as I would to the other, "Come, shall we take another turn?" In short, I treat it with all the respect of a new-comer.

I have made your compliments to the Esculapian fathers*; for I have to tell you that they receive compliments from all parts of Europe: but as you are not acquainted with this affair, you will not be able to understand my meaning. You must know then, that these good fathers, who were on the point of being driven out of the country ignominiously, are, to their infinite joy, established in the good opinion of the world, by the judgement of Solomon, for such his majesty's late decree appears to be. The duke de Chaulnes is supposed to have been the chief promoter of this

* The capuchins *of the Louvre*, as they were called; a body of monks who made themselves very famous in Britany, by several cures which they performed, and the duke de Chaulnes had taken them under his protection.

happy change. The apology of the fathers is in the hands of every one in the province, and all are persuaded of their innocence. In a word, my good duke, I rejoice with you in the honour you have gained by this affair, because I love and esteem you; for which, if you please, my daughter will be my security.

What can you mean, my dear child, by your dreams? what reason have you to make me the object of your jaundiced imagination? You tremble to see me in such a bad way, when nothing ails me! Indeed, my child, you would laugh at your own fears, if you could but see me as I am at present; if you will not believe me, ask the princess. By the bye, do you not intend to thank her for the divine medicine she has sent you? I would have done it for you, but she always insists upon seeing the part of your letters in which she is mentioned, and I should not like to be caught in an untruth.

I have just been writing to Coulanges, and took it in my head to give him a lecture upon that wicked little conscience of his, of which he only diminishes the *quantity* every year*, fearing too great a plenitude, without taking away the quality; for, I am sure, as soon as the holy week is over at Baville, his capital sin, which is *gaudeamus*, will return upon him as strong as ever: but, indeed, almost all the world are the same, with this difference only; that his failings being less blameable than those of many others, we for that reason take the greater liberty to blame him. I have desired him to tell M. de Lamoignon from me, that I willingly accept his invitation, to see him at Baville, with you, in September next.

* At Easter; a general time of confession with the Roman Catholics.

I wish the vacant abbeys were filled up by his majesty in the same way you have filled them; however, their time will come. I request that you will send to the abbé Bigorre, to desire him to put cardinal de Bouillon in mind of the sum that used to be given me every year out of the royal benevolence; it is but trifling, indeed, but poor people are glad of any thing. I will let you know where the money is to be sent.

LETTER DCCXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, April 22, 1685.

Prepare yourself, my child, for another proof of my sincerity. You are certainly endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and I shall for the future tremble whenever you dream only that I am ill. You said, the disorder in my leg was not cured, notwithstanding my journey to Vitré, and the airs I gave myself in consequence; and I begin to perceive you were right. About four days ago this wicked leg took the fancy to swell, and burn, and break out in little watery pimples; in short, to play pranks that surprised me, and every body else, as we were not at all prepared for this new insurrection: for my part I retired to my bed, and let it take its course. It appears, however, to be a crisis which nature stood in need of; the leg discharged plentifully, and I am convinced this will be my cure; for nothing was able to dissolve the hard lumps in the calf of my leg but such a discharge. However, we have sent for the capuchins from Rennes, to pay us a visit here; my son too is desirous of consulting them in his wife's complaint, who is returning to their medicines anew. As for me, I continue to use certain em-

brocations, which I know they have prescribed in similar cases, and which are excellent. We have received an answer from them, "that, from the situation of their affairs, being surrounded by enemies, and persons jealous of their success, they cannot leave their convent, but request that I will come to Rennes; assuring me, that, when they have seen my leg, I may depend upon a cure, but that they must see it in order to apply the necessary herbs and cataplasms." In short, they press me so earnestly to take this little journey, and madame de Marbeuf has offered such a convenient apartment, that I set out to-morrow, in the idea that you approve it, that you advise me to try a change of air; and say besides, that, by putting myself at once under the care of experienced persons, I may be certain of a cure. I have therefore resolved to go, attended only by Marie and two footmen, in a coach and six. I shall leave the *worthy* behind with my son and his wife, and shall return the first moment I am able: for, I assure you, it is with no small regret that I quit this peaceful solitude, and the returning verdure which would almost make me young again; but then, I think, it is ridiculous always to fancy one's-self cured, when it is not so; so that I shall even follow your advice: we must examine whether there are wolves in the fold, and drive them out of it. In all probability, nature has already driven them away in the late eruptions; but I shall be the better satisfied by hearing the capuchins say so. The little wound is closed, and not closed; so that it requires a masterly hand to deliver me from what I have so long suffered, living only upon hope, and twenty times falsely imagining that all was well. Methinks I can hear you at this distance, commending me for my resolution, and telling me, that you are out of patience at finding me so often deceived. Madame de Marbeuf appears so transport-

ed with the thoughts of having me with her, and expresses herself so warmly and affectionately, that I am really at a loss how to answer her kindness; when one cannot absolutely reply in the same tone, it is embarrassing.

TO MONSIEUR DE GRIGNAN.

We love you so well, my dear count, that we do not think Adonis himself was half so handsome; at least he had not so graceful an air as you have, and that is the main point with you gentlemen. Go, go your ways to Livri, after having finished the pious exercises of this holy season in your present retreat: your lovely wife will inform you in what place my destiny has determined I shall pass mine; I should have been very glad to have remained here, but God did not see fit that I should. Your brother-in-law seems perfectly reconciled to this retired life; nay, he is fond of it, and considers it as an earnest of his not being miserable hereafter: he is much occupied with this train of thinking; Heaven continue him in it! for the time will come when all the gaieties of the world will appear very insignificant to us. We all join in compliments of condolence to you, on the death of the chevalier de Buous*, for whom we had a very great regard, as every one must have had who knew him. I hear of nothing but the death of persons younger than myself; this, you know, must lead to certain reflections.

TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

I now return to you, my child. Nothing can equal the beauty of the gallery at Versailles; it is a specimen

* He was of the family of Pontevez, and first cousin to M. de Grignan.

of royal magnificence that has not its equal in the world; I can see it here, by taking a part for the whole. Did you not, while in the midst of all this splendour, once meet the eye of the worthy favourite? and, in so immense a space, did not you make one step towards her, nor she towards you? I shall not tell you what success and happiness I wish to you, my dear child, and to all the noble republic of the Grignans, that will soon be assembled.

I hear that the double marriage of the dukes de Bourbon and du Maine* is fixed for the month of July, and that several ladies are already half wild to obtain the place of lady of honour. I have written to madame de la Fayette, that I shall give my vote to madame de Moreuil for the duchess de Bourbon. Pray

* The duke de Bourbon was married to mademoiselle de Nantes, the 24th of July following; but the duke du Maine's nuptials with mademoiselle de Bourbon were not solemnised till the 19th of March, 1692.

After this first marriage, madame de Montespan withdrew from the court, which, in spite of the magnificence of the entertainments, became daily more and more dull. What was called the king's conversion became complete at the death of the queen, at the end of the year 1683. From that moment, "the ladies who appeared the furthest from devotion never quitted the churches." (Lettres de Maintenon.) Devotion, however, being only in its infancy, still allowed some pleasures. But towards 1685, that of the king became extreme. He did not merely set the example, but he even exhorted women to live piously. He even reprobated *patches* so strongly, that coquets no longer dared to wear them. The dress of men was not exempted. There was a religious costume appropriated to the courtier. La Bruyère describes it in his chapter of *the mode*. The revocation of the edict of Nantes, and its sad consequences, which affected even the king, concurred with infirmity to render his zeal morose. At length, madame de Maintenon became his only society; and, as Voltaire says, "this extraordinary intercourse of affection and scruple on the part of the king, of ambition and devotion on the part of his new mistress," which lasted from the year 1681, ended by their marriage, about the year 1686.

do not forget to mention me to the Pomponne family, for I am determined not to be forgotten by them. I shall not write to Coulanges to-day, for I know he is at Baville.

My leg is so much better since yesterday, that, were it not for the trick it has lately played me, I could find in my heart to spare it the journey to Rennes; but my son and every body else advise me to go, and so I shall set off; I intend to return on the Monday or Tuesday in Easter-week. At present I think I may entertain some hopes, but I cannot be easy when I reflect how often I have deceived you; but it was with no ill intention, and I was deceived first myself, as well as every one about me.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

In short, my dear little sister, we are all so tired and so vexed at the obstinacy of my mother's disorder, and the many tricks her leg has played us, that I myself insist upon her going to Rennes, where she will be immediately under the eye of the capuchins of the Louvre. The swelling in her leg is abated, and the wound heals perceptibly; but we have been so often taken in, and this cure, which we always thought secure, has returned again so frequently, like the hunted butterfly, that, to remove your uneasiness as well as our own, we are sending her to the fountain-head of skill. The *worthy* is left behind; so you know household affairs will be properly managed.

LETTER DCCXXVII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

Baville, April 26, 1685.

I HAVE been extremely uneasy, madam, about you and M. de Grignan, and also about your good mother, whose sacred characters I have not seen for some time; in short, the interest I take in whatever relates to you had begun to trouble the sweet repose I enjoy here, when your messenger delivered me your letter. It was no small gratification to me to hear from you, but at the same time I was very much vexed that this abominable fever should step in so unseasonably to spoil all our schemes.

M. de Lamoignon has laid his plan to stay here all the next week, and does not intend being at Paris till the 6th of the coming month; for my part, I mean to make the most of my time, and if I can find any one to carry me back to Paris with him, I shall embrace the opportunity, because I should be glad to take a trip to Versailles, as I want to learn from M. de Seignelai some news respecting the Languedoc expedition; however, if no charitable person can be found to give me a lift, and as M. de Lamoignon protests he will see me hanged before he lends me his carriage, I may very possibly not see Paris till he goes thither himself. I wrote to Versailles yesterday; and the news I may receive in reply, may oblige me to set out for Paris, though I go in Dourdon's caravan, which passes almost daily at the end of our avenue.

This, madam, is all I have to tell you of my stay in this country; do me the favour to let me have a line how things go on at the hotel d'Angoulême, and I will

also inform you by another line of what part I shall take. I am very glad that the duke de Chaulnes intends to sell Magny; I have long advised him to get rid of it.

So madame de Sévigné is at length at Rennes, under the care of the capuchins; God grant they may effect a cure! but I think it is quite cruel that she should bury herself in Britany for a whole year, because the abbé, with his calculations, has found out that her affairs will not suffer her to return in less time. I assure you I am really uneasy about her; you will oblige me infinitely by informing her of the part I take in her sufferings.

The country begins now to be truly delightful; the fields have resumed their verdure, and the nightingales hail the returning spring with unremitted warblings: we want nothing but a little thicker foliage on the trees to shade us from the beams of the sun, which begin to be very scorching, though M. de Lamoignon does not regard them; for he traverses the fields all day long, while his wife and I shelter ourselves within doors, and play at ombre with any charitable person that will join us. And every evening, when M. de Lamoignon comes home to us, we sing *gaudeamus*. Adieu, my divine countess. Madame de Lamoignon sends you a thousand compliments. I shall show your letter to M. de Lamoignon when he returns home at night.

LETTER DCCXXVIII.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

Rennes, Sunday, April 29, 1685.

WE shall be foolish enough to take Rochelle *, and I shall be unfortunate enough, my dear child, to suffer myself to be cured by these capuchins. I read your sentiments with fondness and admiration, in which I heartily agree with you; if I can obtain a cure in this place, after the many torments I have suffered, God be praised! if not, and I am obliged to return to Paris in search of better assistance, and by that means should see my beloved child again sooner than I expect, God be praised! I thus prepared myself for whatever the Sovereign Disposer of all events should be pleased to ordain; but in my heart would have preferred a continuance of my disorder, if it were to procure me the pleasure of seeing you three or four months sooner, to a cure that was to keep me at a distance from you; for no effort of reason can get the better of this inclination. I accepted the generous offer of madame de Marbeuf, which was as sincere as it was pleasing; and I should have remained with her longer, if my leg, out of pure contradiction, had not grown better and better every day; besides, you know what it is to be under an obligation which it is almost impossible to repay as agreeably as it is conferred; I shall soon, therefore, set out for the Rocks again, my leg being now as well as its companion, which for the last six months may be truly said to have been *without its fellow*. The skin indeed is discoloured, and neither the lotion nor the ar-

* A saying of the great men at the siege of Rochelle, in 1628.

quebusade-water will restore it to its natural hue; there are also some marks, *fructus belli*, but these are only the usual consequences of such complaints. I know not whether my cure is performed by sympathy, but the wound grows better by degrees, as the herbs with which it is steeped, and which are afterwards buried, rot in the ground. I was inclined to laugh at this conceit, but the capuchins tell me, that they have daily experience of the proof of such effects. I should be glad to know what Alliot thinks of it; for I am not sure, after all, whether it is the ceremony of burying these herbs, which is performed twice a day, or whether it is the fomentation and the liniment that are used; but this is certain, that the leg wears a very different appearance from what it has ever done, and that, if this should prove only a temporary cure, I shall come to you in search of a perfect one. These, my dear love, are truths I conjure you not to doubt; but you have thrown out a hint in one of your letters, which has made a dreadful impression on me: you say, that if I return to Paris sooner, on account of my leg, you shall hardly be gone before I arrive. For Heaven's sake, my child, what do you mean? Do not deceive me in a point so essential to my happiness: do not rend my heart with insupportable anguish. You assure me that I shall find you at Paris in September, and that your affairs will not be settled at that time: for my part, I make all the dispatch I possibly can here; I suffer not a single moment to be lost: I have a thousand tedious affairs to settle, but had I the least reason to think that you were likely to be gone, I would set out at all events. How much more willingly would I do for you what I would do even for my leg! it is for you, therefore, to direct me, by your prudence on the one hand, and your affection on the other. You know the

state of my affairs, you know the state of my health, you know your own engagements—direct me therefore according to all these; and, unless some great change has taken place in yours, reflect what a number you had to settle, and that there is not much more than three months to the period we wish for; for I reckon that we are as good as in the month of May now. In a word, I trust my destiny entirely in your hands.

I am extremely uneasy about the chevalier, whose disorder you represent in a very alarming light. It is very unlucky that the rains, which have done every body else so much good, should have had a contrary effect with him; it is cruel to be in continual pain, and not to know which way to turn for relief; his situation quite afflicts me. As for M. de Grignan's fever, I consider it as of less consequence, only I would not have you suffer the physicians to take so much blood from him: they have no mercy. I am afraid, too, that all these fatigues must have a bad effect on yourself, my dear child; the spring, you know, generally causes a little change in your health; tell me, therefore, how you find yourself, and tell me without disguise: learn from me to act openly on these occasions; at the same time, let me entreat you to strike me out of the list of your uneasinesses. Those of the duchess du Lude are too well founded; you describe her husband in a strange state of despair: our capuchins would not prescribe broths in this disorder, they would give him cordials which would recall a soul from the brink of the grave. I have lately had a visit from the attorney-general's lady, the little woman we were formerly so well acquainted with; she is as agreeable and as amiable as ever; we were very glad to see each other; I wished you present to hear her, or rather her husband, for she was lying for dead at the time, relate in what an extremity the

great physician of this country left her, and how wonderfully and skilfully the capuchins snatched her from the jaws of death; it was really worth hearing: you will say, perhaps, her time was not come; no one joins more heartily in such an opinion than myself; but still I cannot help admiring the second causes made use of by Providence to call a poor creature from death to life. We may not improperly apply to these talents, what father Le Bossu says in his treatise on epic poetry, of the veneration in which the first race of mankind held those who were visibly protected by the gods.

But whither, my dear child, am I wandering? I must return to madame de Marbeuf: she read with great delight the two or three lines you wrote to me about her; no one can be more sensible of your esteem: she makes my time pass very agreeably here; we have good company and good music. I went to take an airing in the ring yesterday, but with all the parade of a sick person, because I would not be liable to receive visits: I had one, however, on Thursday last, from the princess of Baden *, who told me the whole story, which I knew before, of her wrath, which is like that of Achilles, and of her banishment. In the evening I returned her visit; and as I found her not likely to be weary of talking, I gave her a patient hearing of three hours: I rested my leg upon a stool; for, without some such distinction, I should have been at a loss to know which was the sound or which the infirm one.

* This lady had been sent from court about the year 1668, at the same time with madame d'Armagnac. It was at the period of the commencement of the king's attachment to madame de Montespan. The queen was informed of it by her. The same manœuvre had been adopted towards madame de la Valliere. The king punished her in the same way; but he apparently saw the impossibility of secrecy, and he soon took no pains to conceal it either from the queen or the public.

You have now my whole stock of news; pray send me some of yours in return. I shall set out from hence on Wednesday, to the no small regret of my good hostess; but the *worthy* longs for my return. I embrace your poor invalids with gentleness; but you, my child, with greater fervour, and an affection that language is too weak to express. I shall write to my poor Coulanges from the Rocks. The capuchins send you a thousand compliments, and ten thousand assurances of my being perfectly cured. The duke de Lude is in a truly pitiable condition; they are confident that the powder of crab's eyes, in a spoonful of milk, would cure him.

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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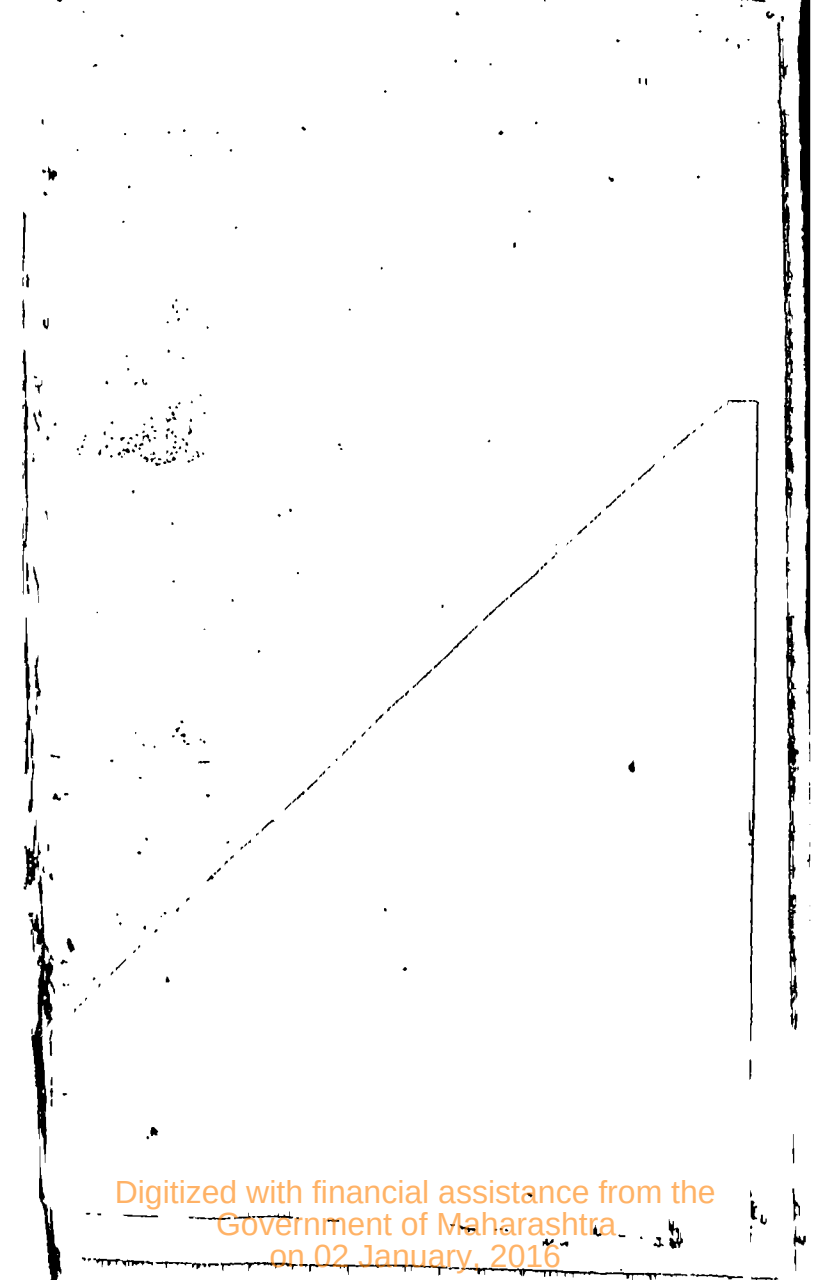

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